

Ex Libris



The
Green Room Club

R 792.0942 LEN V.1
Lennox, William Pitt,
Plays, players and
playhouses at home and
abroad
1881.

CESm 945050
Special Collections
Hamilton Public Library



3 2022 17121418 8

2 vols.
1272 A

PLAYS, PLAYERS, AND PLAYHOUSES
AT HOME AND ABROAD.

VOL. I.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2022 with funding from
Kahle/Austin Foundation

<https://archive.org/details/playsplayersplay0001lord>

PLAYS, PLAYERS

AND PLAYHOUSES

AT HOME AND ABROAD

WITH

ANECDOTES OF THE DRAMA AND THE STAGE

BY

LORD WILLIAM PITT LENNOX.

“All the world’s a stage.”

SHAKESPEARE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,

13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1881.

All rights reserved.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY DUNCAN MACDONALD,
BLENHEIM HOUSE.

CONTENTS
OF
THE FIRST VOLUME.

CHAPTER I.

Thespis—The early English Drama—Mysteries, Interludes, Masques—“Gammer Gurton’s Needle,” the first English Comedy, by John Still, afterwards Bishop of Bath and Wells, produced in 1552—The Tragedy of “Gorboduc,” by Lord Buckhurst and Thomas Norton, Exhibited before Elizabeth by the Students of the Inner Temple, January, 1562—Ancient Playhouses—Dramatic Writers: Otway, Sootherne, Rowe 1

CHAPTER II.

Celebrities of Bygone Days: Mrs. Vanbruggen, Mrs. Oldfield, Mrs. Bellamy—Duchess of Queensberry’s Unexpected Appearance in the Green-room—Peg Woffington and the Pot of Porter—Mrs. Bellamy Takes Leave of the Stage—Anecdote of Henderson the Actor 32

CHAPTER III.

Mrs. Jordan—Her Birth and Marriage—Her First Appearance in Dublin as Phœbe in “As You Like It,” and Subsequent Engagement at York—Her Introduction to a London Audience in “The Country Girl”—Alarm of Fire at the Margate Theatre—Mrs. Jordan narrowly Escapes being burnt to Death—Epilogue spoken by Mrs. Jordan in the Character of a British volunteer—Characteristic anecdote of Mrs. Jordan—“The Devil to Pay”—“It is the knell” (Nell) 45

CHAPTER IV.

My first Play—George Frederick Cooke—Chichester Theatre —Accident to the eminent Tragedian—His “Shylock” and “Sir Archy McSarcasm”—Amateur performance— Our rural Theatre—“The green plot for Stage, the haw- thorn brake for our tiring House”	58
---	----

CHAPTER V.

Dublin Theatricals—T. P. Cooke—A Vice-regal visit—Which is the Man?—London Theatre—Richard Brinsley—A Dinner with Sheridan—Lord Holland’s opinion of his Talents—Astley’s Amphitheatre—A rush to the Gallery— Good feeling of the Occupiers of it—Westminster Bridge— A Ducal Fox-hunter—The Royal Circus—Sadler’s Wells— Modern improvements	84
---	----

CHAPTER VI.

The Infant Roscius—Criticisms on his acting—Selim and Ham- let—Precocious talent censured—Absurdity of a Youth appearing as a Grown-up Man	102
--	-----

CHAPTER VII.

Nell Gwynn—Peg Woffington—Mrs. Abingdon—Beautiful Act- resses—James Smith’s epigram on Mrs. Honey—Aspirants for the stage—Marriage of actresses with Noblemen— Anecdote of the late Lord Graves and Alfred Bunn—The Turkish Question	114
--	-----

CHAPTER VIII.

Patent Theatres—Popular titles to Plays of the legitimate Drama—Covent Garden—Its corps dramatique—Tragic Events—Drury Lane—Celebrated Performers—Elliston and Madame Vestris—First Playbill issued from this Theatre—The Haymarket Theatre—English Opera House —The present Lyceum—The Adelphi, formerly the Sanspareil, St. James’s, Princess’s, Olympic, Strand Theatres—Astley’s Amphitheatre, Victoria, formerly the
--

Royal Coburg, Sadler's Wells, Prince of Wales's, Royalty, and Marylebone Theatres—Vaudeville, Gaiety, Globe, Opera Comique Theatres	129
---	-----

CHAPTER IX.

Old Play-goers—Their prejudices—Prologues and epilogues—Dramatic Patriotism—A Comic Song—Actors' Salaries—Letters from Richard Jones and Charles Kean—The latter on a Starring Engagement	147
---	-----

CHAPTER X.

Haymarket Theatre—Romeo Coates—The denouement—“Die again, Romeo”—Juliet rising from her Bier—A few remarks upon Free Passes into Theatres	159
---	-----

CHAPTER XI.

Sadler's Wells Theatre—The “Dog-stars”—Carlo and the “Caravan”—Real Water—Sheridan's Witty remarks—The Dog of Montargis—“Gelert” at the Royal Circus—A Menagerie and Horsemanship at Drury Lane—George Rignold and his steed in Richard III.—An Ourang-outang at Munich	168
---	-----

CHAPTER XII.

Earl of Shaftesbury, who flourished early in the Last Century—His remarks on the Drama—His censure on Critics who decry Theatrical Performances—His illiberal comments on “Hamlet” and “Othello”—Boileau's lines on those Bigots who denounce the French Stage, equally applicable to our own Countrymen	183
--	-----

CHAPTER XIII.

Indignity to which the English Roscius, Garrick, was exposed—Compliment paid by the House of Commons to a Popular Artist—Vestris, le Dieu de la Danse—A French “Calembour”—Adventure with Jones and Abbott of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden	195
--	-----

CHAPTER XIV.

John Philip Kemble—Mrs. Siddons—Stephen Kemble—Address written by Himself on his appearing as Falstaff—Charles Young—Charles Kemble—Fulsome lines on the Recovery of his Voice 210

CHAPTER XV.

Edmund Kean—Dinner at Greenwich—Kean's Versatile Talent—Mrs. Glover—A Phalanx of English Actresses—Jack Bannister, his Favourite “Fag”—Charles Mathews—Raikes' opinion of Him—Tyrone Power—Irish Johnstone—Downton—Munden—W. Farren—Elliston—Richard Jones—Abbott—Harley—Emery—Fawcett—Keeley—Compton—Bartley—Blanchard 227

CHAPTER XVI.

Liston—“My face is my fortune, sir,” she said—Ill-timed Pleasantries—Curious Scene at the Châtelet Parisian Theatre—Mr. Florence and his Countryman—A Fauteuil Lit . 252

CHAPTER XVII.

Singers—“Vox et Preterea Nihil”—Anecdotes of Braham and Phillips—T. Cooke—His Irish and American Stories—The Music-teacher—The Bull and the Trombone-player—Anecdotes of Madame Malibran—Foreign Vocalists 257

CHAPTER XVIII.

Farewell Nights—Charles Young and Joseph Grimaldi—Pantomimes—Fawcett's Last Appearance—His Witnesses to Character 279

CHAPTER XIX.

Actors Unfairly Charged with Shamming Illnesses—G. F. Cooke—Mrs. Billington—The Occupants of the Gallery Better Behaved than They were wont to be 294

PLAYS, PLAYERS, AND PLAYHOUSES.

CHAPTER I:

THESPIS—THE EARLY ENGLISH DRAMA—MYSTERIES, INTERLUDES, MASQUES—“GAMMER GURTON’S NEEDLE,” THE FIRST ENGLISH COMEDY, BY JOHN STILL, AFTERWARDS BISHOP OF BATH AND WELLS, PRODUCED IN 1552—THE TRAGEDY OF “GORBODUC,” BY LORD BUCKHURST AND THOMAS NORTON, EXHIBITED BEFORE ELIZABETH BY THE STUDENTS OF THE INNER TEMPLE, JANUARY, 1562—ANCIENT PLAYHOUSES—DRAMATIC WRITERS, OTWAY, SOTHERNE, ROWE.

Thespis, inventor of dramatic art,
Conveyed his vagrant actors in a cart;
High o’er the crowd the mimic tribe appeared,
And played and sung, with lees of wine besmeared.

Then *Æschylus* a decent vizard used,
Built a low stage, the flowing robe diffused;
In language more sublime the actors rage,
And in the graceful buskin tread the stage.

Translation from HORACE.

TO adopt a phrase familiar to all who remember the opening sentence of the books which delighted them in their childhood, I

commence this work “Once upon a time” there lived a Greek poet of Attica, five hundred and thirty-six years before the Christian era, who was supposed to be the inventor of tragedy. His representations were very rustic and imperfect. He went from town to town upon a cart, on which was erected a temporary stage, where two actors, whose faces were daubed with the lees of wine, entertained the audience with choral songs, &c. Solon, the law-giver, was a great enemy to his dramatic representations. The indignation which he expressed on seeing the tragical representations of Thespis is well known, and he sternly observed that, “if falsehood and fiction were tolerated on the stage, they would soon find their way among the common occupations of men.”

So deficient are the materials for compiling a perfect history of the English Drama that the reader must be content with only some of the leading features of the ancient national stage, and of the principal points of its rise and improvement. Religious dramas were first introduced into Europe, Italy and France. In England the first spectacle of the kind was

probably the Miracle Play of Saint Catherine, mentioned by Matthew Paris as having been written by Geoffrey, a Norman, afterwards Abbot of St. Albans, and performed at Dunstable Abbey in the year 1110. It is also stated in the “Description of the most noble City of London,” written by William Fitz-Stephen, a monk of Canterbury, about the year 1174, in treating of the ordinary diversions of the inhabitants of the metropolis, that, “instead of the common interludes belonging to theatres, they have plays of a more holy subject—representations of those most sacred miracles which the holy confessors wrought, or of those sufferings wherein the glorious constancy of the martyrs did appear.”

The introduction of these ancient religious dramas, which were distinguished by the names of “mysteries,” into England has been attributed to the pilgrims who went to the Holy Land. By degrees the clergy, observing the disposition to idleness and festivity which was thus introduced by the employment of jugglers, buffoons, and minstrels, substituted their dramatic legends and histories from the Scriptures

for the ordinary profane amusements, causing them to be acted by monks in the principal churches and cathedrals at certain seasons, with all the attraction and state of choral chaunting, playing upon organs, ecclesiastical dresses and ornaments.

The principal of these religious plays were annually performed at Chester at Whitsuntide, sometimes at midsummer, and at Coventry at the Feast of Corpus Christi (of June the 14th). The Whitsuntide plays are commonly called the “Chester Mysteries,” both because they were translated by Randle Higden, a monk of that city, about the year 1327, and were originally played there on the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday in the Whitsun week so early as 1269. They were twenty-four in number, and commenced with “The Fallinge of Lucifer” and “The Creation of the World,” and ended with “Anti-Christ and Doomsday.” There was considerable difficulty in procuring the Pope’s permission that they might be performed in English, and hence it has been presumed that all the previous Mysteries were in Latin, which gives to these pieces the merit of

having been the first interludes in the national language.

A manuscript specimen of a Corpus Christi pageant, instituted at York early in the thirteenth century, yet exists in the records of that city, but the most popular dramas exhibited were generally entitled *Ludus Coventriæ*, or the Coventry Plays, because they were performed there as early as 1416 before Henry V., under the direction of the Franciscan Friars of that city, to which fraternity their original composition has been attributed. A transcript of them in the fifteenth century is in the Cottonian Library, consisting of forty pageants or plays, also extending from the creation to the judgment of the world.

At the times of these performances great multitudes were drawn from all parts of England to Chester and Coventry, to the great benefit of those cities ; and as learning increased, and was more widely disseminated from the monasteries, the acting of sacred plays extended from them to the public schools and universities, when choristers, schoolboys, parish clerks, and trading companies were employed in their repre-

sentation. The Mysteries, both of Chester and Coventry, were performed by, and at the expense of, the members of the trading guilds of those cities, each society retaining to itself a particular portion of the Sacred History. Thus at Chester the Tanners represented "The Fall of Lucifer," the Drapers "The Creation," the Dyers "The Deluge," &c.; and, at Coventry, the Shearmen played "The Nativity," and the Cappers "The Resurrection, and Descent into Hell." The parish clerks of London were also accustomed yearly to perform a long series of Sacred Mysteries at Skinner's Well, near West Smithfield. On July 18th, 19th, and 20th, 1390, they played at Clerkenwell before Richard II., his Queen, and several of the nobility; and in 1409 they presented a drama extending from the Creation of the World till Doomsday—supposed to be one of the Chester or Coventry Mysteries—which lasted for eight days, in the presence of some of the principal personages of the kingdom.

Down to this time it does not positively appear that a drama upon any profane subject,

either tragic or comic, had been produced in England; and even the emblematical and decorative pageants presented to a sovereign were almost entirely scriptural. In 1487, after the birth of Prince Arthur, Henry VII. was entertained at Winchester Castle, on a Sunday during dinner, with a drama called "The Harrowing of Hell, or the Triumphant Entry of Christ into the Infernal World," and by the charity or choir-boys of Hyde Abbey and St. Swithin's Priory, two large monasteries of Winchester. These performances, however, had not become common to all persons without some opposition, since, in 1378, the scholars or choristers of St. Paul's Schools presented a petition to Richard II., praying him to prohibit some ignorant and inexpert persons from acting "The History of the Old Testament," to the great prejudice of the clergy of that church, who had prepared it with considerable cost for representation at the ensuing Christmas.

The stages of the ancient Mysteries, called Pageant-houses, consisted of large and high frame-carriages, mounted on six wheels, and

formed like dwellings, containing two stories, in the lower of which the performers dressed, and played upon the upper, which was either surmounted by arches, battlements, &c., or left open to the top. Rushes were strewed upon the stage, and the lower room was enclosed with cloths, which are supposed to have been painted with the subject or emblem of the performance. A decoration, or pageant, representing the general scene of the piece, was erected on the stage, some of which remaining in 1563 are described as "The City of Jerusalem," "A Fyrmament with a fyry cloud, and a double cloud."

Numerous records are also extant of the dresses and properties used in these performances, which appear occasionally to have been very rich and costly. The Mystery actors had their faces painted, and the plays of Chester and Coventry were attended by waits and minstrels. The theatres were drawn from one street to another in appointed order, as each piece concluded, the whole being in performance at the same time, which divided the crowd, and gave all an opportunity of seeing the entire

series. The time of action was about six in the morning, and nine. Separate pageants were exhibited in one day.

As both the Miracle Plays and Mysteries included the personification of allegorical characters, as Sin, Death, &c., and the poetry of the times improved, a different kind of drama was devised, consisting entirely of such abstract personifications, which were thence called Moralities. They probably did not appear before the reign of Edward IV., 1461, and the splendid pageants presented to Henry VI., being the first which were enlivened by the introduction of speaking allegorical personages, properly habited, naturally assisted in exciting a taste for them. Several Moralities are yet extant, bearing the remarkable titles of "Every Man," composed in the reign of Henry VIII.; "Magnificence;" "Impatient Poverty," 1560; "The Marriage of Wit and Science," 1570; "The Longer thou Livest the more Fool thou art;" "The Conflict of Conscience," 1581, &c.

Mysteries did not, however, cease to be exhibited, though they were probably seldom represented after 1542—43, when a statute was

passed by Henry VIII., to purify the kingdom from all religious plays, ballads, and songs, “as being equally pestiferous and noisome to the common weal;” permitting them only for the rebuking and reproaching of vices, and setting forth of virtues, if they meddled not with Scripture contrary to the declared doctrine. Mysteries and Moralities were then made the vehicles of religious controversy. John Bates’ “Comedy of the Three Laws of Nature,” 1538, in reality a Mystery, being a disguised satire against Popery, as was also Weavers’ Morality of “Lusty Poverty,” written in the reign of Edward VI.

The performance of Mysteries was slightly revived with the Catholic religion under Queen Mary, and in 1556 and 1577 a goodly stage play of “The Passion of Christ” was represented at the Grey Friars in London, on Corpus Christi day, before the Lord Mayor, Privy Council, &c. In the time of Elizabeth these pieces were probably performed only occasionally and privately by Catholics in her earlier years. The Chester plays, revived in 1533, wholly ceased in 1600, and the last Mystery

performed in England is supposed to have been that of Christ's Passion, in the reign of James I., at Ely House, Holborn, on Good Friday, at night, before Count Gondamer, when thousands were present. Moralities continued to be exhibited throughout the reign of Elizabeth and James I., but about 1570 they began to lose their attraction.

In this interval appeared that species of drama called Interludes, or facetious and satirical dialogues, which were commonly played at the festivals held at the Inns of Court. After various attractions and improvements, they became Masques, the serious parts of which were diverted by a ridiculous Interlude called the anti or Antic-Masque.

The first English piece which appears like a regular Comedy was produced in 1552, by John Still, afterwards Bishop of Bath and Wells. It was acted at Christ's College, Cambridge, under the title of "Gammer Gurton's Needle," and abounds in familiar humour and grotesque dialogue. In 1561—62 Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, and Thomas Norton wrote the tragedy of "Gorboduc, or Ferrex and Porrex,"

which was exhibited before Elizabeth at White-hall by the students of the Inner Temple on the 18th of January, 1562. It is a specimen of strong old English eloquence, and is probably the first example in the language of heroic tale in verse, divided into acts, and possessing the formalities of a tragedy.

Neither of these dramas appear to have been acted at a public theatre, nor was there at any time any building in London solely appropriated to plays; but the custom of performing them at Universities greatly contributed to the drama's improvement, since their members began to complete pieces on historical subjects upon the classical model. It may also be observed that the principal early dramatic authors were all scholars. Their taste, however, between 1570 and 1590 produced a number of those sanguinary and bombastic heroic pieces which were afterwards so much ridiculed. The plot of "Gorboduc" having been derived from the ancient British annals, similar sources were immediately resorted to, and those dramas, properly called histories, were brought upon the stage. They consisted of a

series of events taken from the English chronicles, represented simply in order of time, but without any artful conduct of the fable. Their introduction has been erroneously attributed to Shakespeare, though the truth is that every one of his historical subjects had been dramatised and performed before his time. With more probability, their origin has been assigned to the celebrated "Mirror for Magistrates," first published in 1563, in which the most distinguished characters of the English annals are introduced, giving poetical narratives of their own misfortunes. Romance was also now made the subject of dramatic performances, and the "Palace of Pleasure," and various other collections of novels, to which Shakespeare afterwards had recourse, as well as comedies, in English and other languages, were carefully examined, to furnish matter for the stage.

The precursors of Shakespeare who were most famous as dramatic authors were Robert Greene and Thomas Lodge, remarkable for their humorous satire; George Peele, a flowery and most ingenious poet; Christopher Marlow, a fine tragic writer; Thomas Nash, a comic

author and satirist; John Llyl; and Thomas Kyd, whose works contain passages not unworthy of the best of his successors. These all contributed greatly to advance the improvement and perfection of the English stage, and though there may be many blemishes to be found in their productions, and much affectation and pedantry, an unfettered spirit of true poetry runs through them all, with language often dignified and harmonious.

At length, about 1591, the great luminary of the dramatic world blazed out upon England, and began to produce that inimitable series of plays which for more than three centuries have been the delight, the admiration, and the boast of his countrymen. His excellencies are numerous and varied, but the charms of his versification, the beauty of his descriptions, the sublimity of his language, his irresistible humour, and the exquisite nature which pervades the whole of his writings, are perhaps the most striking features of his splendid genius, to which I shall have occasion again to refer. His time, too, formed the golden age of the drama, since the vigorous language and learning of Ben Jon-

son, the wit of Dekkes, the thought of Marston, the gravity of the classical Chapman, the grace and comic vein of Beaumont and Fletcher, the genius of Middleton, the pathos of Webster, and the easy mirth of Heywood, formed an assemblage of more dramatic talent than has ever been witnessed in all the years that have since elapsed.

At this time the players of London began to act in temporary theatres, and on scaffolds in inn yards, on account of the convenience of their spacious areas, galleries, and private passages; and the general form of modern theatres has been attributed to these models; but one or more regular playhouses at the Black and White Friars were certainly erected before 1580, when they were suppressed for their immorality, together with all the temporary stages in London. Between 1570 and 1629 seventeen theatres had been erected, including five inns converted into playhouses, and the singing school of St. Paul's.

The Black Friars Theatre was situate in Playhouse Yard, near Apothecary's Hall, and was built about 1570; the White Friars Theatre

was built in Salisbury Street, or the Court beyond it, before 1580; and the “Cockpit,” or Phoenix Theatre, stood in Drury Lane, and was erected about 1617. These were all smaller than the others, and considered as private playhouses, which were opened in the winter only, the performances being by candle-light; their audiences were of a superior order, and a part occupied seats on the stage at a higher price. The Fortune Theatre stood between Whitecross Street and Golden Lane, Cripplegate, and was partly rebuilt and altered into a playhouse in 1599 by Edward Alleyn. This large edifice was burned down in 1621, and was rebuilt of still greater capacity. The Globe Theatre, one of the most famous in London, was situate on the Bankside, nearly opposite the end of Friday Street; it was of considerable size, the performances always took place in summer, and by daylight. It was erected about 1596, and was burned down June 29th, 1613. The Curtain Theatre, so called from a striped curtain which hung outside, was built in the vicinity of Shoreditch, or perhaps near the Curtain Road, and was opened in 1610. The Red Bull Theatre

stood upon a piece of ground formerly called Red Bull Yard, near the upper end of St. John's Street, Clerkenwell.

Upon removing from the last named house, the King's Company performed in a new building erected in Gibbon's Tennis Court, near Clare Market, and, on the 8th of April, 1663, opened a more convenient edifice in Drury Lane, which theatre was first destroyed by fire in 1672, and was rebuilt in 1809. The Duke's Company performed first at the Cockpit, then at a new house in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and, in November, 1671, at another new and splendid building, called the Duke's Theatre, in Dorset Gardens, Fleet Street. This was abandoned on the opening of the Grand Opera House in the Haymarket, April 9th, 1705, but in 1720 the little theatre was built in the same part of London, to remedy its inconveniences. Covent Garden was originally erected in 1733, and occupied by John Rich's Company, from Lincoln's Inn Fields; it was rebuilt in 1809, after the fire of the preceding year. It appears, from engravings and sketches still extant, that the interior of the old English theatres were hung with tapestry, and

lighted by crepets, lanterns, or wax candles; about 1661, in branches, or circular wooden frames, similar to those which now adorn the modern travelling circus.

After Garrick's return from France in 1765, the present side-lamps were adopted. Silk or woollen curtains, parting in the middle, hung in the rear of the stage, through which the performers entered, and above was a balcony, or upper stage, eight or nine feet from the lower, which was frequently required in various performances, as for the Court during the play of "Hamlet," or the Citizens of Angiers above the gate in "King John." The old stages were separated from the audience by pales, or a balustrade, as may be seen in the title-page of Dr. William Alabaster's Latin tragedy of "Roxana," printed in 1632.

It does not appear that there were any painted scenes previous to 1605, when Inigo Jones exhibited them in three plays before James I. at Oxford; but the name of the piece seems to have been written on a suspended board. During the representation of tragedies the stage was hung with black. Female parts

were originally played by boys, or young men, the first woman on the English stage probably appearing at the theatre in Vere Street, near Clare Market, as Desdemona, on Saturday, December 8th, 1660. Tradition reports her name to have been Saunderson, but Kynaston still remained celebrated for similar parts.

The price of admission at the ancient principal theatres to the pit and galleries, or scaffolds, was generally sixpence, though in some inferior it was only one penny or twopence; yet even in Shakespeare's time the best rooms, or boxes, were one shilling, and at the Duke's Theatre, in Lincoln's Inn Fields, they were two shillings and sixpence.

Plays commenced at one o'clock in the afternoon, and usually occupied about two hours; but in the time of Charles II. they did not begin till four, and lasted longer, the practice of performing two pieces together having been introduced after the Restoration.

The time cannot now be ascertained when the profession of a player became common and established; but Stow remarks that when Edward IV. showed himself in state he went to his

palace at St. John's to see "The City Actors." In the Exchequer are several entries, proving that both French and English actors were attached to the court of Henry VII.; and licences were granted to comedians by Henry VIII., Edward VI., and Mary, the latter of whom retained "eight players of interludes" in her household, at sixty-six shillings and eightpence each, yearly.

In 1574 Queen Elizabeth gave authority to Thomas Burbage and four others, servants to the Earl of Leicester, to exhibit all kinds of stage-plays, during pleasure, in any part of England.

In January, 1583-84, soon after the Puritans had made a violent attack upon the stage, twelve performers were selected from the principal companies then existing, under the protection of various noblemen, and were sworn Her Majesty's Servants.

There were then eight principal companies in London; each performance took place twice or thrice during the week; but after the latter part of Shakespeare's life there were five only: the chief being the performers at the Globe

and Black Friars Theatres, to whom James I. gave a licence in 1603, when they received the name of “The King’s Servants.” The other companies were “The Prince’s Servants,” who played at the Curtain; the Palgrave’s Servants, at the Fortune; the Players of the Revels, at the Red Bull, and the Lady Elizabeth’s, or Queen of Bohemia’s Servants, at the Cockpit.

In this state the players continued until February 11th, 1647, when the Parliament issued an ordinance declaring them rogues and vagrants, liable to the ordinary penalties. The theatres also were ordered to be destroyed, and a fine of five shillings was imposed on every person present at a play. The greater part of the performers, therefore, took up arms for the King; and though, in the winter of 1648, some of them ventured to act at the Cockpit, they were soon interrupted by the soldiers, who took them into custody in the middle of a performance, and committed them to prison.

By connivance, or bribery of the commanding officer at Whitehall, they privately repre-

sented a few plays at a short distance from town, and occasionally entertained some of the nobility at their country seats, especially at Holland House, Kensington, private information being given to the friends of the Drama. They were also sometimes permitted to play publicly at the Red Bull, though not always without interruption, since the soldiers stripped them, and fined them at pleasure, seized upon their wardrobes, and reduced them to perform in suits of painted cloth. In their distress they were often obliged to publish several of those excellent manuscript pieces which had till then remained the sole property of their respective companies. No less than fifty of these dramas appeared in one year.

At the worst period of their persecution the humorous Robert Cox devised a new dramatic entertainment, blended with rope-dancing, etc., to disguise the acting, which entirely filled the capacious Red Bull Theatre. This performance was chiefly a combination of the richest comic scenes of Marston, Shirley, Shakespeare, into single pieces, called *Humours*, or *Drolleries*,

which were printed in 1662, for the use of performers at fairs.

In 1656 Sir William Davenant made another effort for the Drama at Rutland House, where he exhibited entertainments of declamation and music in the manner of the ancients; removing two years after to the Cockpit in Drury Lane, where he remained until the eve of the Restoration.

About the time that General Monk led the Scots' army to London, in 1659, a bookseller named Rhodes, formerly wardrobe-keeper at the Black Friars Theatre, fitted up the Cockpit, and the other actors re-assembled at the Red Bull. After the Restoration two new patents were issued, one to Sir William Davenant, a renewal of that given him by Charles I., and the other to Thomas Killigrew; the former company was joined by the Red Bull actors, and was called the King's Servants; the latter included the old performers under the protection of the Duke of York. These patents no longer exist, monopoly has ceased to exist, and free trade in theatres flourishes to a great extent in our day.

I have now given a brief retrospect of the origin and improvement of the English stage, and shall conclude that portion of the subject with a few remarks upon the spirit and genius of the Drama at its principal eras.

The most illustrious of these was during the reign of Elizabeth, when literature was advancing under the influence of the Reformation, and the works of the British dramatists began to be stamped with that boldness and energy, that graceful simplicity and exquisite nature, which were so entirely their own. This is the character of the best works of the best authors, whilst the coarse jests and gross language which frequently deform some of their finest scenes must be attributed to the imperfection of manners, the slow advance of general civilization, and the remains of that rude humour which introduced its dissolute and profane merriment into even the sacred stories of the Scripture Mysteries. Much of the old poetical spirit remained until the civil wars, when the drama was overthrown in the confusion and violence which ravaged the country; and the Restoration brought over that French taste which had

been so long familiar to the English exiles.

The tide of foreign extravagance and obscenity, of unnatural declamation and unmeaning frivolity, was too powerful for opposition, and even Dryden's splendid talents yielded to the vicious fashion, though their lustre continually breaks forth, notwithstanding their prostitution. With more or less of the same characteristics, the English drama was supported by Otway, Southerne, and Rowe, and afterwards by the many excellent tragic and comic authors of the following centuries.

Otway's "Orphan" was originally produced at the Duke's Theatre, Dorset Gardens, in October, 1679. The melancholy plot was founded on the history of Brandon in a novel called "English Adventures," published in 1667. The principal original actors in the "Orphan" were Betterton in Castalio, Williams in Polydore, Smith in Chamont, and Mrs. Barry as Monimia. Mrs. Barry's performance was pronounced to be inimitable. In after-times Garrick acted Chamont, Barry Castalio, and Mrs. Cibber Monimia. On the 2nd of December, 1815, this tragedy was revived at Covent

Garden, to witness Miss O'Neill's delineation of the character of Monimia.

“Venice Preserved” is unquestionably the masterpiece of Otway; some of the greatest ornaments of the stage have appeared in it. Betterton, the original Pierre, was succeeded by Mossop, Wills, J. P. Kemble, and Charles Young; William Smith, the first Jaffier, by Booth, Garrick, Barry, and Charles Kemble; and Mrs. Barry, the original Belvidera, by Mrs. Cibber, Mrs. Siddons, Miss O'Neill, and Miss Fanny Kemble.

Southerne's “Oroonoko” is founded on a novel by Mrs. Aphra Behn, entitled “Oroonoko, or the American Prince.” In the dedication of this tragedy to William Cavendish, Duke of Devonshire, after acknowledging his former and present obligations to the works of Mrs. Behn, Southerne observes that he had “often wondered that she should bury her favourite hero in a novel, when she might have revived him upon the stage, of which she had so great command; but she thought,” he continues, “that no actor could represent him properly, or she could not bear to see him

represented; and I believe the last, when I remember what I have heard, from a friend of hers, that she told his story more feelingly than she had written it."

Verbruggen was the original Oroonoko, succeeded by Thomas Elrington, and Edmund Kean appeared as the Princely Slave at Drury Lane, with considerable effect, on the 20th of January, 1817. Southerne's other tragedies were "The Spartan Dame," of which little is known, and "Isabella, or the Fatal Marriage," the heroine of which was one of Miss O'Neill's happiest delineations. Dryden places Southerne in the same rank as Otway.

Nicholas Rowe was a most prolific writer; he published his first tragedy, "The Ambitious Stepmother," at the age of twenty-four. It was followed by "Tamerlane," intended as a compliment to King William, "The Fair Penitent," "Ulysses," "The Royal Convert," "Jane Shore," and "Lady Jane Grey." Of the above works two have long been favourites upon the stage, "The Fair Penitent" and "Jane Shore."

"The Fair Penitent" was taken from Mas-

singer's "Fatal Dowry," and the relative merits of both were admirably well discussed by Cumberland in several numbers of the *Observer*. In these papers, it is considered that the latter tragedy has the advantage in a wider compass of fable, in the superiority of Chavalois, to Rowe's parallel character of Altamont, and in the catastrophe where Massinger's heroine is suddenly stabbed by her injured husband, instead of being persuaded to suicide by her father. It is allowed, however, that Rowe has far exceeded his original in the striking part of Lothario, and occasionally in the glowing language in which some of the speeches are clothed. "The Fair Penitent" received the following commendation from that surly lexicographer, Dr. Johnson, who says "it is one of the most pleasing tragedies on the stage, where it still keeps its turn of appearing, and, probably, will long keep it, since there is scarcely any work of any poet at once so interesting in the fable, and so delightful in the language." Notwithstanding the above prediction, this tragedy has long ceased to be a favourite on the stage. The most eminent performers of

Lothario have been Powell, the original gay and gallant Lothario, Garrick, Barry, and Charles Kemble. Betterton was the first Horatio, and Verbruggen the first Altamont; the part of Calista has been excellently sustained by Mrs. Oldfield, Mrs. Barry, Mrs. Siddons, and Miss Fanny Kemble.

“Jane Shore” was originally produced at Drury Lane on the 2nd of February, 1714, with such strong expectations that some days previous tickets were advertised for the author’s nights—the 3rd and 6th—at the principal coffee houses, the pit and boxes to be laid together, admittance 10s. 6d. The last benefit was the ninth night, “at common prices,” and the whole run was nineteen nights the first season. Compare the above with the number of nights Wills’ “Jane Shore” has been performed in our days. The historical period of Rowe’s play is fixed to Friday, June 13th, 1483, when Earl Rivers and Lord Grey were beheaded at Pomfret, and the Protector of Gloucester suddenly accused Lord Hastings at the Tower of witchcraft, in conjunction with Jane Shore. Her penance is commanded (Act iv. Scene 1)

before the death of Hastings, though it did not actually take place until after it, which agrees with the remark of Dr. Warton that the unities of time are neglected in it. “Jane Shore” is, however, one of Rowe’s most interesting and affecting pieces; its domestic scenes and private distresses lay hold upon the heart, and the interview between the heroine and Alicia (in Act v.) is extremely affecting, the madness of the latter being excellently well painted. Dr. Warton censures some of the speeches as being too florid, and inconsistent with the distresses and situations of the characters, yet there is a strong nervous spirit in it, resembling that of the old English dramatists, and the piece is said to have been written in imitation of Shakespeare. I cannot here resist quoting two passages from this heart-withering play:—

“JANE SHORE. It was not always thus; the time has been
When this unfriendly door, that bars my passage,
Flew wide, and almost leap’d from off its hinges,
To give me entrance here; when this good house
Has pour’d forth all its dwellers to receive me;
When my approaches made a little holiday,
And every face was dress’d in smiles to meet me.

But now 'tis otherwise, and those who bless'd me
Now curse me to my face. Why should I wander,
Stray farther on, for I can die ev'n here."

Again, Belmont thus describes her penance :

" Around her, numberless, the rabble flow'd,
Should'ring each other, crowding for a view ;
A burning taper in her hand she bore,
And on her shoulders, carelessly confused,
With loose neglect, her lovely tresses hung ;
Upon her cheek a faintish flush was spread ;
Feeble she seemed, and sorely smit with pain."

The original cast was Cibber, Gloucester ; Booth, Hastings ; Mills, Belmont ; Wilks, Shore : Mrs. Oldfield, Jane Shore ; Mrs. Porter, Alicia. During the present century John Kemble performed the part of the Protector, Mrs. Siddons that of the heroine, and the tragedy was revived for Miss O'Neill at Covent Garden in 1815, who did ample justice to the beautiful but ill-fated mistress of Edward IV. In the present day, Miss Heath (Mrs. Wilson Barrett) has immortalised herself by her admirable delineation of the character, drawing tears from the audience by her exquisite pathos and heart-rending tenderness.

CHAPTER II.

CELEBRITIES OF BYGONE DAYS : MRS. VANBRUGGEN, MRS. OLD-FIELD, MRS. BELLAMY—DUCHESS OF QUEENSBERRY'S UNEXPECTED APPEARANCE IN THE GREEN-ROOM—PEG WOFFINGTON AND THE POT OF PORTER—MRS. BELLAMY TAKES LEAVE OF THE STAGE—ANECDOTE OF HENDERSON, THE ACTOR.

Were but my thoughts in words arrayed, I might impart
A brilliancy to that undying flame
Which ever blazes round thy well-earned fame—
Brighten the halo that surrounds thy name—
Add to the glory of thy wondrous art.

EDWARD LEATHES.

A MONG the celebrities of bygone days must be mentioned Mrs. Vanbruggen, wife to Montford, the actor, who was murdered as he was escorting the celebrated Mrs. Bracegirdle home from the theatre. On Mrs. Montford was the well-known popular ballad of “Black-ey’d Susan” written by Mr. Gay. Lord Berkeley’s partiality for this lady induced him to leave

her, at his decease, three hundred pounds a year, on condition that she never married. His lordship also purchased Cowley for her, which was afterwards the summer residence of Mr. Rich, and she besides received from him at times very considerable sums. After this, she fell in love with Booth, the actor, but the desire of retaining her annuity prevented her marrying the man whom she preferred to numbers that were candidates for her favour. This consideration obtruding, the union could not take place, and Mr. Booth soon found another willing to listen to his suit.

Mrs. Montford had contracted an intimacy with Miss Santlow, a celebrated dancer and tolerable actress. She was the declared favourite of Secretary Craggs, through whose liberality she became possessed of a fortune sufficient to enable her to live independent of the stage.

What Mrs. Montford could not effect, Miss Santlow did. Mr. Booth, transferring his attentions from the former to the latter, soon obtained possession both of her person and fortune. Mrs. Montford no sooner heard of the perfidy

of her lover, and the ingratitude of her friend, than she gave way to a desperation that deprived her of her senses. In this situation she was brought from Cowley to London, that the best advice might be procured for her. As during the most violent paroxysms of her disorder she was not outrageous, and now and then a ray of reason beamed through the cloud that overshadowed her intellect, she was not placed under any rigorous confinement, but suffered to go about the house. One day, during a lucid interval, she asked her attendant what play was to be performed that evening, and was told that it was "Hamlet." In this piece, whilst she was on the stage, she had always met with great applause in the character of Ophelia. The recollection struck her, and, with that cunning which is usually allied to insanity, she found means to elude the care of her servants, and got to the theatre, where, concealing herself till the scene in which Ophelia was to make her appearance in her insane state, she rushed on the stage before her rival, who played the character that night, and exhibited a far more perfect representation of madness than the

utmost exertions of mimic art could do. She was in truth Ophelia herself, to the amazement of the performers as well as of the audience. Nature having made this last effort, her vital powers failed her. On her going off, she prophetically exclaimed, "It is all over!" Indeed that was soon the case, for as she was being conveyed home, to adopt one of the concluding lines of an exquisite ballad of Gay's, wherein her fate is so truly described,

"She like a lily drooping, then bowed her head and died."

Mrs. Oldfield and Mrs. Porter rose gradually to excellence and fame much about the same time. They were on the warmest terms of friendship. Mrs. Porter's gravity was a contrast to the sprightliness of Mrs. Oldfield, who would often in jest call her mother.

Mrs. Porter lived at Heywood Hill, near Hendon. After the play she went home in a one-horse chaise, her constant companions being a book and a brace of horse-pistols. The dislocation of her thigh-bone was attended with a circumstance that deserves to be recorded. In the autumn of 1731, as she was taking the air in her one-horse chaise, she was stopped by a

highwayman, who demanded her money. She had the courage to present one of her pistols at him. The man, who probably had only with him the appearance of firearms, assured her that he was no common thief, that robbing on the highway was not to him a matter of choice, but necessity, and in order to relieve the wants of his poor distressed family. He informed her, at the same time, where he lived, and told her such a melancholy story that she gave him all the money in her purse, which was about ten guineas. The man left her, upon which she gave a lash to the horse; he suddenly started out of the track, and the chaise was upset—this occasioned the dislocation of her thighbone.

To her honour let it be recorded that, notwithstanding this unlucky and painful accident, she made strict inquiry after the man, and, finding that he had not deceived her, she raised amongst her acquaintance about sixty pounds, which she took care to send him. Such an action, in a person of high rank, would have been celebrated as something great and heroic; the feeling mind will make no distinc-

tion between the generosity of an actress and that of a princess.

Mrs. Bellamy, George Anne Bellamy, was so named from the circumstance of her being born on St. George's Day, April 23rd, 1733, a few months after her mother's arrival in Ireland, with her husband, Captain Bellamy, who had married her at Lisbon. Her coming into the world was in unison with her future life, in disclosing the shame of those with whom she was connected. The time of her birth proved to the unhappy Captain that the woman he had taken to his bosom was in the family way at the period he had married her at Lisbon, where her original seducer, Lord Tyrawley, then resided; he immediately left the kingdom, and endeavoured to banish the remembrance that such a person existed, for he never saw nor corresponded with his wife after the disclosure.

Lord Tyrawley wrote to a Captain Pye, who resided near Fingal, to take the innocent child from its abandoned mother the moment it was born, who accordingly took care of her till she was four years of age, when he was directed to send her to France for education. There

she was placed in the Convent of the Ursulines till she was eleven years old, when her father ordered her back to England. His lordship was soon after appointed Ambassador to the Court of Russia, leaving his daughter to the care of a lady, under a prohibition never to see her mother, and appointing a hundred pounds a year for her support.

Her first calamity rose from a source which might perplex a casuist to determine its degree of demerit. During Lord Tyrawley's absence, her mother, being in great distress, had sought her daughter's assistance, who hastened to her relief, and expended her money and trinkets upon her, but found, when Quarter-day arrived, the agent his lordship had employed but too faithful to his trust. The condition had been broken on her part by going to her mother, and the annuity was stopped. The mother soon found the fruit of having tempted her daughter to disobedience was an increase of her own distress by having another to provide for, besides reducing her child from affluence and comfort to a participation in her own wretchedness. These circumstances led the

way to her introduction on the stage, when she was in her fourteenth year, about 1747, when Messrs. Rich and Quin had the management of Covent Garden Theatre; here she made her first appearance in the character of Monimia in “The Orphan;” this, and her performance of Eudosia in the “Siege of Damascus,” acquired popular applause, and the patronage of the nobility of her own sex.

It is not our intention to follow Mrs. Bellamy through her theatrical career, or to give a journal of removals from London to Dublin, from Dublin to Edinburgh, &c., and the parts represented on each night of performance; all we shall report is that she appears to have been a very respectable performer of the second class.

The period at which Mrs. Bellamy commenced her theatrical career was remarkable for profligacy of manners among the higher orders, and it would surprise our readers were we to record the deeds of these titled ruffians, fashionable profligates, who gloried in giving celebrity and *éclat* to their abandoned conduct. The playhouses were given up to their licentious practices, and the well-known anecdote of

the Duchess of Queensberry suddenly entering the green-room, and becoming petrified with horror on seeing Mrs. Woffington with a pot of porter in her hand, giving for a toast, “Confusion to all order!” was but too true a representation of general manners.

The point of time chosen by Miss Bellamy to go off with her seducer was during the representation at the theatre, and before she had discharged her duty to the public by finishing her part. The audience were astonished to hear that a young actress of sixteen and her lover had insulted them by leaving them to sit in stupid amazement in the midst of a performance, and their surprise was not lessened at the apology, when Quin came forward and stated “that the whimsical girl had left Heartfree” (her lover in the play that night), “and found one more to her purpose.”

We will not attempt to follow Miss Bellamy in her career, or give the names of those, in other respects great and splendid, who fell victims to her charms. These have been fully recorded in her well-known “Apology for her own Life.”

Her work contains abundant confirmation of the miseries attendant on a life like hers. At one time we behold her rioting in splendour, at another pining in want, and dreading a prison—sufferings rendered more poignant by contrast, like the extremes of ice and fire—as suddenly raised to the pinnacle of luxurious enjoyment, and as suddenly finding herself without a shilling, or one of her admirers to comfort her, wandering in St. George's Fields at midnight, meditating suicide, which she attempted at the foot of Westminster Bridge, and finally labouring to the end of life under the pressure of indigence, and depending on casual and scanty benevolence.

Mrs. Bellamy took leave of the stage on the 24th of May, 1785.

On this occasion Mrs. Yates, who had retired from the profession, performed the part of the Duchess of Braganza, and Miss Farren, afterwards Countess of Derby, spoke an address, which concluded with the following couplet :

“ But see, oppress'd with gratitude and tears,
To pay her duteous tribute she appears.”

The curtain then ascended, and, Mrs. Bellamy

being discovered, the whole house immediately arose to mark their favourable inclinations towards her, and from anxiety to obtain a view of this once celebrated actress, and, in consequence of the publication of her life, then celebrated authoress. She was seated in an arm-chair, from which she in vain attempted to rise, so completely was she subdued by her feelings. She, however, succeeded in muttering a few words expressive of her gratitude, and then, sinking into her seat, the curtain dropped before her, having by these few farewell words, perhaps, more deeply affected her audience than by her best efforts as *Juliet* and *Cleone*.

Mrs. Bellamy was not only a beautiful woman, but a most accomplished actress. She was the successful rival of Miss Rossiter during the tedious “*Romeo and Juliet*” contest between Garrick and Barry—a contest which was carried on with as much rancour as that between the Montagues and Capulets. She also established Dodsley’s play of “*Cleone*,” refused by Garrick. In the opinion of Garrick, Quick, and other critical contemporaries, Mrs. Bellamy sur-

passed even Mrs. Woffington in conversational powers.

Few sights are more painful than to witness the leave-taking of some old and established favourite, more especially when age or infirmity has overtaken them. I could mention many instances at which I have been present when those who have delighted the public for years have made a gap that could scarcely be filled, and who, amidst the sympathetic cheers of the audience, have retired into private life, some to poverty, others to comparative affluence.

Next to the feeling above referred to, there is one equally painful, when artists re-appear or continue on the boards after their powers are exhausted. Among other remarkable illustrations of the above may be mentioned the re-appearance of those very old favourites, Mrs. Abingdon, Mrs. Crawford, and Madame Mara ; old favourites they truly were, as it is said on the aggregate their united ages amounted to nearly two hundred years.

Mrs. Crawford prudently made her *entrée* in the matronly line, as Lady Randolph ; but the

other two ladies, struggling to the last, reappeared as those interesting spinsters Beatrice and Polly, in “The Beggar’s Opera,”

I am here reminded of a smart saying of Henderson, the actor. The first time that Henderson, then a young actor, was rehearsing a part at Drury Lane, George Garrick came into the boxes, saying, as he entered, “I only come as a *Spectator*.” Soon after he made some objections to Henderson’s playing, when the new actor retorted, “Sir, I thought you were only to be a *Spectator*, you are turning *Tattler*.” “Never mind him, sir,” said David Garrick, “never mind him; let him be what he will, I will be the *Guardian*.”

CHAPTER III.

MRS. JORDAN—HER BIRTH AND MARRIAGE—HER FIRST APPEARANCE IN DUBLIN AS PHŒBE IN “AS YOU LIKE IT,” AND SUBSEQUENT ENGAGEMENT AT YORK—HER INTRODUCTION TO A LONDON AUDIENCE IN “THE COUNTRY GIRL”—ALARM OF FIRE AT THE MARGATE THEATRE, MRS. JORDAN NARROWLY ESCAPES BEING BURNT TO DEATH—EPILOGUE SPOKEN BY MRS. JORDAN IN THE CHARACTER OF A BRITISH VOLUNTEER—CHARACTERISTIC ANECDOTE OF MRS. JORDAN—THE “DEVIL TO PAY”—“IT IS THE KNELL” (NELL).

Men have marble—women waxen—minds.
 And therefore are they formed as marble will ;
 The weak oppressed, the impression of strange kinds
 Is formed in them by force, by fraud, or skill :
 Then call them not the authors of their ill,
 No more than wax shall be accounted evil,
 Wherein is stamped the semblance of a devil.

SHAKESPEARE.

I NOW turn to that fair daughter of Thalia,
 Mrs. Jordan. “A fortunate combination of
 circumstances seems to have formed this lady

for that high degree of eminence in her profession to which she has long attained. The cassock and the sword have joined their powers to make her what she is; from the former source we may naturally suppose she derived taste and pathos, and from the latter the courage needful to display those talents to advantage in the most trying of all situations, on the boards of a crowded theatre."

So writes a biographer of bygone days. Metaphor apart, Mrs. Jordan's maternal grandfather was a Welsh clergyman, and her father a captain in the Army, whose name was Bland, a gentleman of some property. Being stationed with his regiment in the clergyman's neighbourhood, the captain found ready admission to his rural dwelling. A consequence too natural to be any way matter of surprise followed; access to the father's house paved the way to gain access to the daughter's heart, and the triumphant warrior is said to have "carried her off" with him to Ireland—a mode of speaking which seems to imply that it was without her father's consent. It appears, indeed, to have been one of those inauspicious matches of which romances

are full, wherein the consent of both families was entirely disregarded; for though they were legally married, and their union crowned with a numerous issue (no fewer than nine children), the captain's relations had influence enough, by means, or upon grounds which were never made public, to annul the marriage, and the hapless mother was turned adrift with her helpless offspring, and no provision made for them. How pleasing would be the task of Mrs. Jordan's biographer, could he speak with equal praise of every act of her life as he can of the motive which first induced her to devote herself to the stage: it was the support of her mother and the destitute family.

Miss Bland's first appearance was in Dublin, under the management of Mr. Ryder, in the humble character of Phœbe, in Shakespeare's "As You Like It." Not choosing, from prudential considerations, to exasperate, or, from generous motives, to bring odium upon her father's family, she was announced in the bills of the day under the assumed name of Miss Francis; but, finding that this step only afforded an occasion to those inveterate relatives to re-

flect upon her mother, she showed her spirit by acting several nights by her real name, as the daughter of Captain Bland. Such an unlooked for instance of resolution does not seem to have produced proper concessions on their part, as she was very shortly announced again by her former fictitious name.

Little reputation, however, was attached to either name. They were not the names destined to shine in histrionic annals. Her removal from Mr. Ryder to the theatre at that time under the direction of Mr. Daly, might be called her ascent up the first step of the temple of fame, as there she began to attract some degree of notice, more especially in the character of Adelaide in the “Count of Narbonne.” If we may judge from subsequent events, some strong cause of dissatisfaction was given by the manager to the young actress, which, in a fortunate moment, induced her to run all risks with regard to the legal consequences of breaking her engagement, and quit Dublin for England.

She accordingly, accompanied by her mother, took her passage in a sailing-vessel, at that time

a most tedious affair, and, having landed in England, they directed their course to Leeds, where the York company, under the management of Mr. Wilkinson, was performing. On her applying to the manager, he asked in what line she proposed to act; whether in tragedy, genteel or low comedy, or opera. He was not a little surprised at her reply, that, with his permission, she would attempt them all. Whatever doubts he might entertain of the lady's universality, he promised her a fair trial, and announced her for the part of Calista in "The Fair Penitent," with songs after the play, and Lucy in the after-piece of "The Virgin Unmasked," all in one night—the same night on which the name of Jordan was first assumed. It failed, nevertheless, to screen her from the resentment of the Dublin manager, who, having discovered her through her disguise, threatened to arrest her for the penalty annexed to her articles, which had been forfeited. She was extricated out of this disagreeable dilemma by the kindness of an elderly gentleman, who, having given a patient hearing to the cause of her withdrawing from Dublin, found that her prose-

cutor was adding persecution to insult, and generously paid down the sum of two hundred and fifty pounds, the forfeit incurred.

The time of her continuance with the York company was about the space of three years, where she received the full benefit of Mr. Wilkinson's instructions, who, finding his labour amply repaid, gave her every advantage and opportunity of improvement. Mrs. Jordan was not the only instance in which a London audience have derived delight from the display of powers drawn forth and fostered by that veteran of the stage, who was almost the last remnant of the old school, and was contemporary with a race of the children of Thespis whose names are still repeated with pleasure, of many of whom, without intending any ill-natured comparison, we may say "we ne'er shall look upon their like again."

In her now improved state, Mrs. Jordan attracted the notice of Mr. Smith, a well-known London actor, who saw her perform when he happened to be passing through York; and at his return recommended her so effectually to the managers of Drury Lane that they immedi-

ately engaged her at a salary of four pounds a week. Her removal to London took place at the time of Mrs. Siddons' noontide splendour, and, finding herself excluded from all hope of rivalling that lady in her own line, she, in the true spirit of Cæsar, preferred to be the first in comedy rather than the second in tragedy, and thereby devoted herself to the service of Thalia, and accordingly joined her sportive train.

“The Country Girl” was happily revived, and made choice of to introduce her to a London audience. Those only who were witnesses to the scene can form any just idea of the novelty displayed in her conception of the part, or the *naïveté* manifested in her manner of representing the character. Her salary was immediately doubled, raised soon after to twelve pounds per week, with two benefits during the season. She was after a time in possession of the highest salary then given at Drury Lane.

Her mother, for whose sake she first turned her thoughts to a theatrical life, continued to participate in the fruits of her success to the end of her days in 1789; indeed, her uniform kind-

ness to all her relations, and readiness to give her gratuitous services in aid of charitable institutions, was known to all. A proof of her just sense of propriety, founded upon feeling, occurred on her return to the stage in 1800, after a very long absence. An address to the audience on the occasion was prepared for her, couched in terms of egotism and false wit which vanity might have betrayed her to recite, but good sense taught her to avoid. A striking proof of her manner of captivating an audience by what was truly her own manner appeared in May, 1800, when her introducing and singing the simple ballad of the “Blue Bells of Scotland” on her benefit night made that air popular throughout the kingdom.

A dreadful alarm was excited in the audience at Margate in September, 1802, when her dress caught fire in the last scene of “The Country Girl,” but which was happily extinguished without her receiving any harm.

One of Mrs. Jordan’s best parts was the Widow Cheerly in “The Soldier’s Daughter.” The character is very highly finished; the lively, good-humoured, and delightful widow is a very

pleasing madcap, with an air of novelty, and that is really no small difficulty subdued, after the numerous attempts that have been made to draw such a character. Mrs. Jordan's Widow was all that vivacity and sensibility could make it. To this the house ever gave their testimony in the loudest applause. The enthusiasm with which they seized the following words can scarcely be adequately described:—"It is said of me that I have a facility in raising the spirits and creating good-humour wherever I am." It may be here not out of place to give the epilogue that was spoken by Mrs. Jordan, which with some slight alteration would be appropriate to the present time :

"Before the fatal knot is fairly ty'd,
Before I change the widow for the bride,
Once more at this tribunal I appear,
Nor doubt your favour to a volunteer.

• • • •
Say, is the day our own ? how goes my cause ?
You needn't speak, I'll judge by your applause.
'Tis well—this approbation's highly cheering,
I claim some merit for my volunteering ;
And, like the sons of Albion's hardy soil,
Disdaining peril and severest toil ;
A mass of subjects in one loyal band,
To drive the spoiler from their native land ;

And future tyrants teach that host to fear,
Who boast the name of British Volunteer.
Ladies, I one proposal fain would make,
And trust you'll hear it for your country's sake ;
While glory animates each mortal nerve,
Should British women from the contest swerve ?
No. We'll form a female *army of reserve*,
And class them thus : the old are *pioneers*,
Widows *sharpshooters*, wives are *fusileers*,
(Here let me add a line suggested at the moment.)
And our great grand-dames prove good granny dears
(*grenadiers*).

Maids are *battalions* that's all under twenty,
And as for *light troops*, we have them in plenty,
Vixens the *trumpet* blow, scolds beat the *drum* ;
When thus prepared, what enemy dare come ?
Those eyes that even Britons could enslave
Will strive to light our foemen to the grave :
So shall th' artillery of British charms
Repel invaders without force of arms.
If this succeeds, as I the scheme have plann'd,
I expect, at least, the honour of command.
I have an *aide-de-camp* behind the scene
Who all this winter in the camp has been ;
Inur'd to service in the tented field,
She can with ease the pond'rous musket wield,
The martial skill she shall impart to you
Which on this spot so oft has had review ;
Then humble, foes ! since British women can
A firelock handle as they do a fan !
Now, brother soldiers—dare I sisters join ?—
If you this night your efforts should combine

To save our corps from anxious hope and fear,
And send out *mercy* as a volunteer,
To whose white banner should the critics flock,
Our rallying numbers might sustain the shock,
The sword shall then cease from impending slaughter,
If mercy's shield protect the soldier's daughter."

Reynolds tells an amusing story of this lady. Among other male characters she appeared in a comedy of his, entitled "Cheap Living," as Sir Edward Bloomly, a boy of fifteen assuming all the airs and manners of manhood.

Mrs. Jordan, weary of male attire, did not like the boyish hero, which so nettled Wroughton that, during one of the rehearsals, in his plain, frank manner, he said to her,

"Why, you are grand, quite the duchess again this morning."

"Very likely," she replied; "for you are not the first person who this very day has condescended to honour me ironically with this title."

Then smiling, without the slightest pique, and with all her characteristic humour, she told him that, having during that morning discharged her Irish cook for impertinence, and paid her her wages, the indignant professor

of gastronomy, taking up a shilling and banging it on the table, exclaimed,

“Arrah now, honey, with this *thirteener* won’t I sit in the gallery, and won’t your royal grace give me a curtsey, and won’t I give your royal highness a howl and a hiss into the bargain!”

Of Mrs. Jordan it was said :

“ ’Tis not, my friend, her speaking face,
 Her shape, her youth, her winning grace
 Have reached my heart ; the fair one’s mind
 Quick as her eyes, yet soft and kind,
 A gaiety with innocence,
 A soft address with manly sense,
 Ravishing manners, void of art,
 A cheerful, firm, yet feeling heart,
 Beauty that charms all public gaze,
 And humble amid pomp and praise.”

Again it has been said of her :

“ Her smile was by a thousand smiles repaid,
 Her art was nature, govern’d by the laws,
 To acts of good, full oft she lent her aid :
 Her talents gain’d her thus, with hands, the heart’s
 applause.”

I never saw Mrs. Jordan except upon one occasion, when she acted Nell in “The Devil to Pay,” and a more exquisite performance I never witnessed. It was genuine comedy, free from stage trick and exaggeration.

Here I am reminded of an incident that occurred connected with that amusing farce. A popular actress, Miss Duncan, afterwards Mrs. Davison, whose talent was second to none, during the temporary absence of Mrs. Jordan took the part of Nell, the cobbler's wife, and personated it in a manner that shed fresh lustre on this favourite daughter of Thalia. When Mrs. Jordan resumed the character, Miss Duncan was led by curiosity to the theatre, and occupied a seat in a private box close to the pit. Upon being recognised by a wag in the front row, he exclaimed, fortunately in a tone that was only heard by his immediate neighbours, "Hear it not, *Duncan*, for it is a *knell*," (Nell). Apt as was the quotation, it was not warranted in this case, for in many respects Miss Duncan was scarcely inferior to Mrs. Jordan.

CHAPTER IV.

MY FIRST PLAY—GEORGE FREDERICK COOKE—CHICHESTER THEATRE—ACCIDENT TO THE EMINENT TRAGEDIAN—HIS “SHYLOCK” AND “SIR ARCHY M‘SARCASM”—AMATEUR PERFORMANCE—OUR RURAL THEATRE—“THE GREEN PLOT FOR STAGE, THE HAWTHORN BRAKE FOR OUR TIRING HOUSE.”

“I remember waiting at the door. Oh, when shall I be such an expectant again! with the cry of nonpareils, an indispensable play-house accompaniment in those days. As near as I can recollect, the fashionable pronunciation of the theatrical fruiteresses then was, “Chase some oranges, chase some nonpareils, chase a bill of the play;” chase *pro* chuse. But when we got in, and I beheld the green curtain that veiled a heaven to my imagination, which was soon to be disclosed, the breathless anticipations I endured! The orchestra lights at length arose—those “fair auroras!” Once the bell sounded It was to ring out yet once again. It rang the second time. The curtain drew up. It was all enchantment and a dream. No such pleasure has since visited me but in dreams.”

My First Play—CHARLES LAMB.

THE first dramatic performance that I attended was at Chichester, early in the present cen-

tury. The event that brought it about, and the delight I experienced, was similar to that of Charles Lamb, who thus expresses himself in the above quoted motto: "It was all enchantment and a dream; no such pleasure has since visited me but in dreams."

My tutor, Mr. Taylor, whom my brothers and myself irreverently called "Stitch," was devoted to the nicotian weed, and was seldom without a cigar in his mouth. His amusement used to be to puff the smoke in our faces, the fun of which we were dense enough not to understand. One night he not only puffed the smoke against my face, but unintentionally dropped the hot ashes down my collar; upon my screaming out lustily I was called a milksop, and told at once to go to bed.

"Why, what is the matter?" asked the house-keeper, who met me on the stairs.

"It pains me dreadfully," I exclaimed.

"And no wonder, my dear boy," said the kind-hearted Mrs. Hardwick; "why, there's a blister as large as a shilling."

Under her care and that of the housemaid, who applied cotton wool to the burn, I soon

felt more comfortable, and, after a refreshing night's rest, appeared at the breakfast-table. Mr. Taylor was a kind-hearted man, albeit rather tyrannical ; so, extending his hand, he expressed his regret at the accident, gave us a whole holiday, and proposed a drive to Chichester.

At the period I write of, my father being in Ireland, Goodwood House was shut up, and myself and my brother Frederick were at a farm-house at Stoke, preparing for Westminster School. When passing a barn, my attention was attracted by the following posting-bill :—

THEATRE, CHICHESTER,

Friday, July 21st, 180—.

MR. GEORGE FREDERICK COOKE,

The celebrated Tragedian,

Will have the honour of appearing in two of his most
favourite characters,

Shylock in the “ Merchant of Venice”

And Sir Archy McSarcasm in “ Love à la Mode.”

For further particulars see small bills.

As we stopped for a few minutes to arrange the harness, I descended from the vehicle and read the announcement over and over again. I

had heard of the delights of a theatre from many a young companion; I had seen characters and scenes descriptive of the gorgeousness of "Blue Beard," the "Blood Red Knight," and "Lodoiska," had laughed over the tricks and transformations in "Mother Goose," had peeped through a glass at a fair when "Obi, or Three-fingered Jack," and "Harlequin Magic" were performed all for the small sum of one penny; but a regular play I had never attended.

While building many a (theatrical) castle in the air, I was recalled to real life by the approach of my tutor, who appeared in the highest spirits, caused, as I was afterwards informed, at the thought of seeing this truly eminent tragedian.

"Why, what are you studying, my boy, so intently?" he inquired.

"A play-bill," I meekly responded.

"What, Cooke the great actor coming to Chichester to act two of his best characters! that would be a treat indeed."

We proceeded on our way; during the whole of the drive I could think of nothing but the play, and my joy knew no bounds when my

tutor, delicately alluding to my late accident, and what he kindly called my manly conduct, promised to take us to the theatre on the following Friday.

Upon reaching Chichester, we secured five front seats in the boxes, and then proceeded to the house of Captain Humphreys, to invite him and his wife to accompany us to the play. This the worthy militiaman's wife cheerfully assented to, inviting us to dine with them at four o'clock on the evening of the performance. I will not attempt to describe my state of restlessness during the time that intervened. The morning at length arrived, and I counted the hours between breakfast-time and the hour for leaving.

“Now, my boys,” said Captain Humphreys, “it's time to be off.”

Need I say we at once obeyed the injunction, and soon found ourselves at the entrance of the theatre.

“Five front seats, box No. 7,” was announced by the manager in a stentorian voice to the box-keeper, who lost no time in offering us a bill of the play.

The house was crowded to the roof, and the discordant sounds that issued from the occupiers of the gallery perfectly astounded me. The good old green curtain (deemed plebeian in the present day) was down, and a man in a carpenter's dress was lighting six tallow candles that were stuck into wet clay, and partly screened by dirty tin shades. The front of the boxes, the ceiling, and the proscenium were somewhat tarnished, and the figures of Thalia and Melpomene were a little worn and rather out of proportion. The musicians were perched up in a small division in the centre of the orchestra—a regular band-box, as a wit in the gallery called it, the rest of the seats having been thrown into the pit. The stage doors had been removed, and two small private boxes erected in their stead; these were reserved for the officers of a cavalry regiment stationed at the barracks. The pit was full almost to suffocation, and there was not much room to spare in the boxes.

A somewhat boisterous appeal from the gallery for music, accompanied with a term which I could not at the moment understand, but

which applied to the organ of the olfactory senses, produced an immediate response, and the orchestra, reduced to a squeaking fiddle and a spasmodic clarionet, performed two of Haydn's symphonies and an overture in an almost incredible space of time. At last, after a great deal of yelling, shouting, hallooing, cat-calling, during which the roaring of lions, warbling of cats and screech-owls, with a mixture of the howling of dogs, was judiciously imitated, the curtain rose, and disclosed a scene in Venice as unlike the views of that fairy city "of wealth the mart" which I had been accustomed to see at Richmond House, my father's London residence, from the pencil of Canaletti, as the Adriatic Bucentaur is to a Thames sand-barge.

Three personages now appeared, looking more like Venetian bravoes than the honest merchant and his two friends, and I became thoroughly engrossed with the plot of the play; it is true that the interest was not a little marred by the imperfect manner in which the trio delivered themselves of their respective speeches.

This scene was followed by one between

Portia and Nerissa, Portia flaunting about in a bright, cherry-coloured cotton velvet, elaborately ornamented with tinsel, spangles, and imitation gold lace, while her waiting-woman appeared in a very faded satin dress such as no English Abigail would condescend to wear. Unquestionably the costumes of both mistress and maid gave the spectator a poor opinion of the wealth and taste of the Belmont heiress.

No sooner had these two ladies left the stage than a breathless silence ensued, which was almost instantaneously followed by shouts that rent the air. Shylock appeared; the applause increased, nothing could exceed the enthusiasm of the audience. After a time he commenced—“Three thousand ducats—well. For three months—well. Antonio shall be bound—well.” These words were uttered in such a tone and given with such expression that my whole feeling was with the actor. My attention was riveted to the scene, I could think of nothing else; I listened, I gazed, I watched every movement, every muscle. Not a word, not a look, escaped me; and although, perhaps, the opinion of so youthful a critic may be deemed presumpt-

tuous, and some allowance must be made for the excitement attending a first play, I have never had any reason for changing the impression thus early formed that Cooke as Shylock stood unrivalled.

I have since seen the “supernatural” John Philip Kemble in “Coriolanus,” the chivalrous Charles as “Faulconbridge,” the majestic Siddons as “Constance,” the classical Young as “Brutus,” the impassioned Kean as “Richard the Third,” the plaintive O’Neill as “Juliet,” the dignified Somerville as “Hermione,” the accomplished Macready as “Macbeth,” the talented Charles Kean as “Hamlet,” the pathetic Ellen Tree as “Desdemona,” Rachel in “Les Horaces,” Fechter in “La Dame aux Camelias,” Salvini as “Othello”—I pass over living artists—and though one and all in their respective characters have evinced the finest conception, the most admirable portraiture of the noblest creations of the Bard of Avon, they have not erased from my mind the effect produced by George Frederick Cooke in the delineation of “*the Jew that Shakespeare drew.*”

During the time that Shylock was off the

stage I was all impatient for his return ; the drolleries of Launcelot Gobbo, his practical joke with his “ sand ” or rather “ high gravel ” blind father, were lost upon me. Nor could the melodious strains of the “ pretty Jessica,” represented by a dark-eyed Maid of Judah, captivate my senses. This young syren, who was the *prima donna* of the company, seemed to set all dramatic unities at defiance ; her dress, if such a term can be applied to the very scanty apparel that *unadorned* her person, consisted of a short tunic and a very scant pair of Turkish trousers.

With a thorough contempt for time, place, and action, Miss Woolf, as the Hebrew Melodist was called, had stipulated for the introduction of two popular ballads, and, to the surprise of the Shakespearian audience, where the Usurer’s daughter soliloquizes,

“ O, Lorenzo ! If you keep promise, I shall end this strife,
Become a Christian, and thy loving wife,”

she proceeded as follows :

“ But should you prove faithless, then will the hapless Jessica know no peace of mind ; all will be dull and dreary ; for in the words of

the popular ballad," so Miss Woolf pronounced, "what would be this dull town to me if Lorenzo was not here?" At this introduction the band struck up "Robin Adair," at that period the most *organized* ditty in England. The other occasion for this unclassical interpolation was equally inappropriate; for, when Jessica's lover asked, "How chearest thou?" she replied:

"Happy and content as the inmate of the lowly cot by Afton's crystal stream. How lovely it glides and winds among the green trees:

"How wanton thy waters her snowy feet lave,
As gathering sweet flowrets she stems the clear wave."

At this cue the leader, tapping his rosined bow against the tin-candlestick, played the opening bars of "Mary of Afton Water," another favourite melody of the day.

The attentive reader will have perceived the ingenuity of the singer, who always made a point of reciting some of the words or spirit of her song before she commenced it, which not only saved her the trouble of emending Shakespeare, but had the additional advantage of giving the audience the benefit of knowing what

she was about to utter—a consummation devoutly to be wished, and one we humbly recommend to all *prima donnas*.

The fourth act had commenced. Shylock, with balance in hand, was gloating over his Christian victim, and was preparing to take the pound of flesh, when an event occurred that nearly paralysed the audience. In whetting his knife, to cut the forfeiture from the bankrupt's breast, the blade slipped, and nearly severed the actor's thumb; in a second the stage was deluged with blood. A cry for surgical aid was raised by those who witnessed the accident from the side-boxes and front row of the pit; but to those who, like myself, were at a little distance, and were totally unacquainted with the plot of the play, the effect was terrible. I watched the agonized look, the writhing expression of the suffering man as he attempted to staunch the blood, and was about to reward his truly living personification with a round of applause when the curtain dropped, and the manager came forward to request the indulgence of the audience until the medical practitioner could decide whether Mr. Cooke would

be enabled to go through the remainder of the performance.

The cause of the accident was soon buzzed about throughout the house, but did not reach my ears. The great George Frederick Cooke was no teetotaller. Had he lived in these days he would have shown the most perfect contempt for the abstemious principles of that well-meaning legislator, Sir Wilfrid Lawson. The great actor was as much addicted to the *dram* as the Drama, and, having dined rather freely at "The Swan," had got a little elevated. A few glasses of whisky-punch, and brandy and water during the first three acts, had produced a strong effect, and by the time he had arrived at the trial scene the "potations pottle deep" began to tell, and the hard-hearted Jew found himself extremely inebriated, or, to use a fashionable and, in this instance, not an inappropriate term, completely *cut*.

The manager again made his appearance to claim further indulgence, as the medical man had not yet made his report.

This appeal to the British public produced the desired effect, and during the necessary

delay the majority consoled themselves by refreshing the inward man with all the delicacies the house could furnish—adulterated porter, mixed ale, flavourless ginger-beer, sour cyder, stale cakes, unripe apples, and acrid plums. To me the suspense was most painful, for I could not help entertaining a fear that the performance would terminate, or that some other farce would be substituted for the one announced. After a few minutes of watchful anxiety the manager came forward, and relieved the minds of the audience by reading the following bulletin:—

“I, the undersigned, certify that the injury Mr. Cooke has met with is not likely to be attended with serious consequences, and that no fear of tetanus need be entertained. The wound, although inflamed and painful, has been brought into a state of apposition, and maintained in that position by adhesive plaster and bandage.

(Signed) GILBERT FORBES, M.D.”

The manager continued:

“Ladies and gentlemen, under these gratifying

circumstances Mr. Cooke, ever anxious to fulfil his duty towards his kind patrons, will have the honour of re-commencing the fourth act of the ‘Merchant of Venice,’ and trusts that he will be able, with your indulgence, to go through the part of Sir Archy McSarcasm.”

The address was received with shouts of applause, and the trial-scene proceeded. There was no diminution of the actor’s vigour, and the curtain fell amidst cheers from all parts of the house. I had now but one wish ungratified, and that was to go behind the scenes to see and converse with the great tragedian, and this was soon brought about.

The heat had been so intense throughout the evening that I gladly availed myself of my tutor’s proposition to get a little fresh air. As we stood under the small portico of the theatre, enjoying a slight southerly breeze, the manager addressed us, expressing a hope that he might announce a performance under the immediate patronage of myself and my brother.

“I fear,” responded Mr. Taylor, “that the Duke would scarcely approve of such a step; but if you like to say ‘under distinguished pat-

ronage,' we will make up a party and attend the performance."

"A thousand thanks, sir. Perhaps you would like to see Mr. Cooke; if so, it will afford me much pleasure to take you behind the scenes; we are rather cramped for room."

"It will afford me much gratification," replied our dominie. Then, turning to me, he continued, "You can remain here or return to the box. I will join you in a few minutes."

"Oh! do take me," I beseechingly implored.

"Come along, my boy."

Following the manager up a rather perpendicular ladder we reached the box over the stage-door, then used as the "stars" dressing-room. Upon ordinary occasions this box was a sort of *sanctum sanctorum*, in which the cash-taker at the doors, after the receipts were taken, temporarily placed the amount; here, too, the checks were counted, the play-bills filed, and here all sudden changes of dress took place, subjecting too often the hurried actor or actress to the chance of breaking their limbs in their hasty descent. Here, too, the manager's wife, the leading tragedian and Portia of the night,

was enabled, through a small aperture which opened on the first circle, to count the house, so as to ascertain whether her numbers tallied with the return. Whenever a “star” visited Chichester this box was given up to the newcomer as a dressing-room. We were then ushered into the presence of the suffering man.

The pencil of a Hogarth, a Cruickshank, a Leech, or Phiz (Hablot Brown) could alone give a picture of the curious scene that presented itself. The apartment was about five feet in breadth, and ten in depth ; the floor was covered with a coarse, showy-looking drugget ; the walls were distempered a bright amber colour ; a wooden stage-chandelier, with four tallow “dips,” hung from the ceiling ; a looking-glass, from which a considerable quantity of the mineral fluid had escaped, a deal-table, and a few rickety chairs, formed the remaining furniture.

From pegs in the wall hung the Jew’s gaberdine, his hat, wig, beard, and stick. An embroidered coat and waistcoat and a powdered periuke were in the hands of the “dresser” and “coiffeur,” ready to be put on. The great man himself was seated in a state theatrical-

chair, covered with purple velvet and gold tinsel, by the side of the small table, upon which were sundry decanters and wine-glasses, hot water, lemon, and sugar; and a bottle of brandy had just been brought in from a neighbouring public-house.

While another bandage was being applied by Dr. Forbes, who had followed us into the room, I had a good opportunity of scanning the physiognomy of the great tragedian. The most prominent features of his countenance were a broad, long, hooked nose, dark eyes full of fire and expression, a strongly-marked and flexible brow, a high forehead, a mouth capable of delineating the worst passions of our nature.

Cooke's manner was polished and refined until maddened with the invincible spirit of wine; and, as at the time I saw him he had partly recovered from his excess, nothing could surpass his urbanity.

“Sit down, Mr. Taylor; take a chair, my boy. A capital bowl of punch,” said the actor, as he filled three tumblers with this most potent beverage. “So I hear you like my Shylock. I was rather wild in the trial-scene; but wait

for the farce, I'll give it them in my best style."

With all the enthusiasm of youth, I launched forth into a criticism upon his unrivalled performance.

"Another glass, my boy," I modestly declined, when he proceeded :

"If you come up to London, send your name in to me at the stage-door—you must see me in 'Richard the Third.'"

Bowl after bowl was now vanishing, and the strength of the punch was evidently operating upon the principal toper.

"The audience are getting impatient," said the manager ; "would you kindly finish dressing?"

"Impatient!" responded the tragedian, raising his voice from the low tone in which he had been speaking to its sharp, emphatic key. "Tell the Chichester people that George Frederick Cooke will not be dictated to by them ; I that have acted before royalty will not stoop to these Sussex rustics."

The manager did all in his power to soothe the ruffled temper of the "star."

"Fill your glass, my friend, I drink to your

health," continued the histrionic hero of the night.

"Thank you, Mr. Cooke," responded the manager; "but pray consider the audience, the lateness of the hour, and your kind friends the British public."

"All right, my boy; go and tell them that I'll soon astonish their weak minds."

A sound of hissing and cat-calling was now heard, and the wretched manager, anticipating a riot, again urged Cooke to prepare himself for the performance.

"It shall be done—I will arraign them straight," he replied, and was rising from his chair, when the entrance of the prompter gave another current to his thoughts.

"Oh! sir," said the new-comer, "they're getting quite obstreperous in the gallery, and the Mayor is quite impatient."

" . . . Let the great gods
That keep this dreadful bother o'er our heads
Find out their enemies now,"

responded the tragedian. "And as for the chief magistrate, in the words of Buckingham say—

‘And so, my good Lord Mayor, we bid farewell,’
for I will not be hurried by any man, much less
by one ‘drest in a little brief authority.’”

The prompter looked quite disheartened
when the great man continued,

“Sim, my dear boy, a glass of punch?”

The prompter was all gratitude ; before, how-
ever, he sipped the liquor, he ventured to make
one more appeal, urging the danger a further
delay might cause.

“Avaunt!” cried Cooke, in his sharpest and
shrillest tone. “One word more, and I’ll walk
out of the theatre. Let the money be returned
to the discontented crew; I’ll none of it.”

The manager looked horror-struck at the
idea of refunding, fully agreeing with valiant
Jack Falstaff “that paying back is a double
labour.”

Fortunately for the manager’s interest, a
simple remark made by a stripling produced
more effect than the urgent appeal of the man-
ager and his prompter.

“Is Sir Archy as good a part as Shylock?” I
inquired, with boyish curiosity.

“I forgot ; you shall see, and judge for yourself.” So, starting up, he finished dressing, and with a chuckle said, in a strong Scotch dialect, “Vary weel, vary weel, hear what Sir Archy has to say.”

We lost no time in returning to the box ; and when the curtain drew up for the farce, the actor had so far recovered his senses that, being perfectly “up” in the part, as it is technically called, he went through it with the most consummate ability.

At the conclusion of the performance, I crossed the stage and shook hands with the great man.

“I shall expect to see you in London, my boy,” said he ; “you must not judge of me by my Shylock of to-night. Come to Covent Garden, and you will see it to perfection.”

“I hope I shall,” I responded.

Alas ! that expectation was never realized. I passed the Christmas holidays in London. On the 28th of December, Cooke was announced for Shylock at Covent Garden Theatre, with the following cast :—Bassanio, Charles Kemble ;

Gratiano, Farley ; Shylock, Cooke ; Portia, Miss Norton ; Jessica, Miss Bolton.

I easily prevailed upon my tutor to accompany me there ; and having taken our seats in the front row of the pit—stalls were not then in prospective existence—we anxiously awaited the performance. “He’ll not appear to-night,” said an elderly gentleman, who sat next to me. “So I fear,” replied another. “What a degradation!” exclaimed a third.

After remaining in an awful state of suspense for more than half an hour an apology was given for Mr. Cooke, who had not made his appearance at the theatre. Amidst marks of disapprobation and tumult, Mr. Charles Kemble was permitted to go through the character.

For a length of time I could not drive the actor from my thoughts, and it was with sincere grief and dismay that, a few years afterwards, I read the following announcement:—

“On the 26th September, 1812, at New York, George Frederick Cooke breathed his last; aged fifty-seven years and five months.”

Thus ended the life of one gifted with the highest endowments : a warm heart, a generous

nature, and a mind far above that usually allotted to mortals. Had he combined with these advantages prudence and good conduct, he would have been handed down to posterity as one of the brightest ornaments the stage ever witnessed. Peace to his Manes !

During the short dramatic summer season at Chichester, independent of the performance already alluded to, we attended the "Bespeak," and were present on the manager's benefit; the plays selected on those evenings being "King Lear" and "The Revenge." It is true that the stock tragedian of the company did not come up to the "brilliant star" that had so dazzled me, still the minor light was far from feeble, and delighted me to no small degree.

Can it be wondered, then, that the impression made upon my pliant mind increased rather than diminished? The histrionic art soon became a passion. I could think and talk of nothing else; every leisure moment was devoted to Shakespeare, and I learnt the speeches of Shylock and Lear by heart, spouting them to Mrs. Hardwick, Harry Arthur, the footman,

James Morris, the groom, and whoever else was patient enough to listen to me.

The Jew was my favourite part. I had converted an old brown table-cover into the Hebrew gaberdine; I had made myself a beard from the stuffings of one of Farmer Halstead's old cart-saddles, and, with a wooden knife and a pair of scales furnished by the carpenter, I strutted about on every holiday, looking much more like a Monmouth Street old clothesman than the Venetian money-lender. One morning I was taken for a May-day sweep, and was called upon, by some clods, to execute the shovel and broom dance. To render the performance attractive, I easily persuaded one of my cricketing companions to read the other parts, or to give me the "cue;" for I now began to understand the theatrical phrases; and the dining-room at Stoke, with a couple of screens as side-scenes, or a rural, natural theatre of Scotch-firs in the shrubbery, with, as Quince says, "the green plot for stage, and the hawthorn-brake for our tiring-house," often witnessed our dramatic efforts, to the delight and astonishment of Tom Grant, the

huntsman, Bartlett and Sharpe, his two whippers-in, the housekeeper, butler, house-maids, gardener, footboy, groom, stable-boys, and any other spectators that we could press into the service.

CHAPTER V.

DUBLIN THEATRICALS—T. P. COOKE—A VICE-REGAL VISIT—
WHICH IS THE MAN?—LONDON THEATRE—RICHARD BRINSLEY—
A DINNER WITH SHERIDAN—LORD HOLLAND'S OPINION
OF HIS TALENTS—ASTLEY'S AMPHITHEATRE—A RUSH TO THE
GALLERY—GOOD FEELING OF THE OCCUPIERS OF IT—WEST-
MINSTER BRIDGE—A DUCAL FOX-HUNTER—THE ROYAL
CIRCUS—SADLER'S WELLS—MODERN IMPROVEMENTS.

Ah! happy years! Once more, who would not be a boy?
BYRON.

AS a Westminster boy, I passed many Christmas holidays in Dublin during the period my father was Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland. Dublin could then boast of two theatres, the Theatre Royal and the Royal Hibernian; each of which had a phalanx of talent unprecedented in the sister Isle. They could boast of the names of Miss O'Neill (afterwards Lady Becher), then in her teens, Miss Walstein, Messrs. Conway, Farren, Henry Johnstone, Wallack, T. P.

Cooke, and many others second alone to them in fame.

“The Lady of the Lake” had been published on the 10th of May, 1810; the critics had pronounced it to be “the most interesting, romantic, picturesque, and graceful of the author’s poems.” They declared that “the rocks, the ravines, and the torrents were not the imperfect sketches of a hurried traveller, but the finished studies of a resident artist, deliberately drawn from different points of view, and the figures which were combined with the landscape were painted with the same fidelity. Like those of Salvator Rosa, they were perfectly appropriate to the spot on which they stood. The boldness of feature, the lightness and compactness of form, the wildness of air, and the careless ease of attitude of the mountaineers were as congenial to their native Highlands as the birch and the pine which darkened their glens, the sedge which fringed their lakes, or the heather which waved over their moors.”

No wonder, after the above panegyric, that managers were anxious to produce a dramatic version of the poem, and both the managers of

the Dublin theatres set to work to bring out a piece worthy of the talent which was to be employed in it.

At the Theatre Royal the cast of “The Lady of the Lake” was powerful. Misses O’Neill and Walstein appeared as the representatives of the two leading characters, the former as Blanche of Devon, the latter as Ellen Douglas.

Conway looked James Fitzjames to the life at the Royal Hibernian, where the play was called “The Knight of Snowdoun.” Henry Johnstone was Roderick Dhu, Wallack Norman, Cooke Red Murdoch. Nothing could exceed the beauty of the scenery; the play creating a perfect *furore* among the warm-hearted Irish. As the manager’s principle was not to “keep more cats than could kill mice,” the services of some of his leading performers were pressed into other pieces; thus Cooke appeared as clown in a pantomime called “Gil Blas, or Harlequin’s Peregrinations.” After Henry Johnstone left the company, Cooke was promoted from Red Murdoch, the treacherous guide, to the chief of Alpine’s clan, and no one who saw his noble bearing in this character

would have recognized him when he donned the motley garb of clown.

My father and mother occasionally attended the theatre without any state; and, as Cooke's benefit was announced to take place the night before my brother and myself were to leave Dublin to return to Westminster, we persuaded our parents to patronise him on that occasion.

The performance consisted of "The Death of Captain Cook" (an ominous title, considering the name of the *bénéficiaire*), and, for that night only, a harlequinade entitled "Clown's Metamorphosis"—Clown, Mr. Cooke; old man, Mr. Cooke; lover, Mr. Cooke; columbine, Mr. Cooke. Although Cooke lacked the fun of Grimaldi, by the aid of youth and great agility, he hustled through the part most satisfactorily, delighting the audience and causing the greatest mirth when he appeared as the graceful Columbine.

At the end of the performance, the manager made his appearance in the private box, to ask if his Grace and the young gentlemen who had made themselves so conspicuous by their vociferous applause would like to go behind the scenes to look at the wonders. Wax candles

in hand, the manager, after the most approved manner of receiving illustrious guests, conducted us to the stage and green-room, where the pantomimic tricks were duly displayed by the attentive property-man, who fully explained the mysteries behind the curtain. He showed us how the transformations were managed; how the sprites descended and ascended through the “traps”; how the nimble Harlequin, the active Clown, the slippered Pantaloons, were caught in blankets after their leaps through clock-dials, shop-windows, picture-frames, sign-posts, and looking-glasses; how the smallest of boys was introduced into a sham goose’s skin; how the thunder was made; how they caused the lightning to flash artificially; how a certain quantity of dried peas rolled about in a metal frame represented a storm; how a few daubs of paint, some gold and silver leaf, red and green tinsel, produced the splendid fairy scene; how some spangles sown on a coarse parti-coloured suit made Harlequin glitter like gold; how a white calico garb, with a few quaint crimson and blue devices, some chalk and red paint, could change the “human face divine” into a mask.

After inspecting everything worthy of note behind the scenes, we were about to proceed to the stage-door, where the carriage was in waiting, when, in passing the green-room, we met the Clown, who had remained behind to arrange some "business" with the Harlequin.

"I forget his name," said my father, who, although he made it a rule to patronize the drama, did not take especial interest in the performance.

"Cooke," responded the manager.

"I congratulate you, Mr. Cooke," continued my father. "I've seen Grimaldi very often, therefore I ought to be a good judge. Your performance has delighted us all greatly."

Cooke bowed his acknowledgments.

"Pray," asked the Viceroy, "is Mr. Cooke, who looked so well and acted Roderich Vich Alpine the other night with such grace and spirit, any relation of yours?"

"A very near and dear one," replied the actor; "he stands before you—for, 'Saxon, I am Roderich Dhu.'"

My father smiled, shook hands with the artist, declaring he had never witnessed so

wonderful a transformation. The above Cooke was the inimitable T. P. Cooke of William renown in “Black-eyed Susan.”

In my early days the most popular entertainment was the theatre. People, even the most fashionable, dined early, so as to be present at the rising of the curtain. There was no introductory piece to fill up the time previous to the arrival of the supersine ladies and the smart young men that now occupy the stalls. The pit was not deprived of its fair proportions, nor had the *crème de la crème* of society invaded the seats devoted to the critics. Instead of a screaming, or, too often, a senseless piece, preparatory to the commencement of the tragedy or comedy, the performance commenced with one of the latter, concluding with an afterpiece or musical farce. According to the present system, we reverse the gastronomical order of things; the light *entremet* comes before the *pièce de resistance*, which would be like serving the ortolans, quails, and ducklings before the saddle of mutton, or haunch of venison. The play too, began and ended at a reasonable hour.

In the days I refer to, the Kemble family had increased the amount of public favour which Garrick had attracted to the stage. They were well supported both in tragedy and comedy; indeed, the masterpieces of Shakespeare were splendidly acted. Let me not be misunderstood, or accused of a want of due appreciation of the talents of the artists that have since graced, and still grace, our boards. If I do not refer to them personally, it is because I should be loth to omit, through inadvertence, any name that might escape my memory.

It was not during the Kemble dynasty that the works of that master mind,

“Which so did take Eliza and our James,”

alone enjoyed the favour of the public; for the genteel comedy of the eighteenth century was represented with equal force and truth by the pen of Sheridan. This accomplished wit and brilliant orator had added largely to his laurels by producing for the stage “The Rivals” and “The School for Scandal.” Surprising as were his oratorical displays in the House of Com-

mons, and in Westminster Hall, during the Warren Hastings' prosecution, their beneficial effect was insignificant compared with the results of his dramatic productions.

As an associate of the Prince of Wales, his name had the advantage of fashionable repute ; but the merits of his writings required no such assistance to place them in the exalted position they have since held. I once dined in company with Sheridan ; but I was then young, and, as Cleopatra says, “in my green and salad days.” All I remember was, that he drank deeply, and kept the table in a roar at his smart sayings, many of which being on the political subjects and characters of the day, I was dense enough not to understand.

There can be no doubt that the eulogium passed upon him by Lord Holland was correct :

“ Whatever Sheridan has done, or chosen to do, has been, *par excellence*, always the best of its kind. He has written the best comedy (‘The School for Scandal’); the best drama, in my mind, far beyond that St. Giles’s lam-

poon, ‘The Beggar’s Opera;’ the best farce (‘The Critic’)—it is only too good for a farce; and the best address (Monologue on Garrick); and, to crown all, delivered the very best oration (the famous Begum speech) ever conceived or heard in this country.”

Somebody told Sheridan this next day, and, on hearing them, he burst into tears. “Poor Brinsley! If these were tears of pleasure, I would rather have said those few but most sincere words than have written ‘The Iliad,’ or made his own celebrated ‘Philippic;’ nay, his own comedy never gratified me more than to hear that he had derived a moment’s gratification from any praise of mine.”

“She Stoops to Conquer,” by Sheridan’s predecessor, Goldsmith, “The Road to Ruin,” by his contemporary, Holcroft, are among the very few dramatic illustrations of English character of the same age that maintained their popularity for the next century.

Less legitimate productions, such as “The Castle Spectre,” by Mark Lewis, “Pizarro,” and “Timour the Tartar,” for a time carried on a successful rivalry with them, but

they lived the spasmodic life of sensational dramas.

When at Westminster School I constantly made a party to visit Astley's between the hours the school broke up for the day and the time we were locked up at our respective homes. As money was not very abundant, and we were anxious not to be recognized, we always went early, so as to secure a front seat in the shilling gallery, where we remained until about eight or ten minutes of our names being called at our boarding-houses. It so happened that, at the hour we were about to leave, a crowd was waiting at the doors for the half-price, and at first it was with great difficulty that we made our way through the gathered multitude. Knowing that, in those days, Westminster boys were very popular with the *oi polloi* as patrons of Gooseberry Fair, in Tothill Fields, and as boaters on the river, we made an appeal to them to let us pass, which was cheerfully responded to by a cry of "Make room for the young gentlemen." This enabled us to "chivy" home, as the Dean's yard phrase went,

in time for our evening roll-call. This allusion to Westminster Bridge reminds me of a curious fact.

Of the numbers that were wont, some years ago, to pass over old Westminster Bridge (now replaced by a modern, handsome structure), few are aware that the public are indebted for the bridge to the keenness of a foxhunter, the Duke of Grafton. About the year 1735 his Grace kept foxhounds at Croydon, in Surrey, and regularly went from London very early on the days he hunted. The old Duke used to complain bitterly of the interruption he met with in crossing the Thames at Westminster from the delay and inattention of the ferryman, by which he often lost several hours of a fine morning before he arrived at Croydon. To remove this inconvenience he projected a bridge at Westminster, and brought a bill into Parliament for its erection, which was completed in the year 1748.

I now return to the theatres, which were very popular in my schoolboy days.

Astley's Amphitheatre and The Royal Circus

were devoted to horsemanship in the ring and sensational dramas. At Astley's there was "Muloc the Slave," "Fair Rosamond, or Woodstock Bower," "Richard the Lion," "The Iron Tower," "Blood will have Blood, or The Battle of the Bridges."

At The Royal Circus, "The Fatal Prediction, or The Midnight Assassin," "The Fire King, or Albert and Rosalie," "King Cæsar, or The Negro Slaves," "Rinaldo Rinaldini, or The Black Tribunal," "The Algerine Corsair," "The Abbot of St. Martini."

Occasionally the above theatres would produce grand military and naval spectacles, such as "British Glory in Egypt," of which, it was said in the newspapers of the day, "The death of Sir Ralph Abercrombie was represented in a manner that drew tears from almost every eye." "The Northern Fleet," a grand naval spectacle, in which the cannonading and silencing the forts of Cronenburg, the bombardment of the town and arsenal of Copenhagen, the destruction of the floating batteries, the unparalleled bravery of our gallant sailors were portrayed in a surprising manner. A representative of

the brave Nelson was seen in his flag-ship, which, from its size and the admirable manner in which it manoeuvred, gave every appearance of reality, being full of men at their stations, and with the rest of the fleet, gunboats, shallops, etc., formed a most striking appearance.

At Sadler's Wells, among other grand aquatic, military, and naval spectacles, was "The Siege of Gibraltar." In the last scene, on one side, the garrison appeared, and on the other the combined fleets of France and Spain. The intermediate part was real water, which reached from the orchestra to the extremity of the stage. The ships and floating batteries were beautiful models, and perfect in every respect, to the smallest *minutiae*. The representation of the siege was as exciting as gunpowder, blue lights, roaring cannon, and shouts could make it.

Notwithstanding the lateness of the dinner-hour, the introduction of clubs where men may pass their evenings in the most luxurious manner, and not, as in my early days, be driven to the theatre as the only way of whiling away the time after a dinner at the Clarendon, Gullon's, Richardson's, or the Piazza coffee-

houses, the theatres were never more fully attended than they now are. It is strange, too—for the numbers have increased greatly—the fashionable world do not confine their patronage to the principal theatres, as they formerly did, but extend it to any place of amusement whenever there is anything worth seeing.

I well remember a coachman, belonging to a noble family with whom I was dining, on being told to drive to the Tottenham Court Theatre, now called the Prince of Wales's, asked, “Whereabouts is it? I have been in Tottenham Court Road, but do not remember any theatre there.” In the palmy days of the Bancrofts, and in the “Forget-me-not” days of Geneviève Ward, the locale is as well-known to every driver as St. James's Palace.

The introduction of stalls has been a great attraction to the *élite* of society; for, once retained, they are reserved during the whole of the evening. Such was not the case in former days, except as regards private boxes, which with few exceptions were small, and did not give the majority of the occupiers a good view

of the stage. Those that went into the dress-circle were obliged to occupy their seats during the first act, or they were forfeited. Then again, as the box-office keeper, who was always a most important personage in the theatre, had an annual benefit, a considerable amount of favouritism was shown. Brandon, of O. P. notoriety, at Covent Garden, and Spring at Drury Lane, were the most polite and obsequious of box-office keepers, and both had an eye to the main chance. If a lady of rank's carriage drove up to the door, and the occupier of it asked for a first and second row in the front of the dress-circle, the answer would be:

“I regret, my lady, every place is taken. I think we have six seats on the second and third row of the side-box next to the stage.”

“How unlucky!” responded the lady.

Then, turning over the pages of the book before him, he would proceed:

“I find, my lady, that I have the very seats you require taken by Mrs. Charles Kemble for some friends of hers. I have no doubt that, as you are so liberal and distinguished a patroness of this house, she would permit me to give her

party a private box. I have still one disengaged. Mr. Notter" (addressing a clerk), "please step round to the stage-door and ask Mrs. Charles Kemble whether she will allow me to exchange the seats she has secured for a private box."

In a very short space of time Mr. Notter returned.

"Please, sir, Mrs. Charles Kemble desires me to say that she will be perfectly satisfied with any arrangement you may make."

"Many thanks. Mr. Brandon, you will be sure to send me notice when your benefit is to take place."

There was not much fear of Mr. Brandon forgetting this, who replied,

"Thank you, my lady. I shall have great pleasure in forwarding your ladyship a playbill, and shall reserve the seats you usually honour me by taking until I hear from your ladyship."

Mr. Spring of Drury Lane was more of a sporting character, who knew full well (to adopt the language of the turf) either to make a running or a waiting race according to those

he had to deal with. Both, however, in their way, were most civil and obliging to all play-goers, and were most conscientious in doing their best for their employers, whatever favouritism they might show to the public.

CHAPTER VI.

THE INFANT ROSCIUS—CRITICISMS ON HIS ACTING—SELIM AND HAMLET—PRECOCIOUS TALENT CENSURED—ABSURDITY OF A YOUTH APPEARING AS A GROWN-UP MAN.

You'd scarce expect one of my age
To speak in public on the stage,
And if I chance to fall below
Demosthenes or Cicero,
Don't view me with a critic's eye,
But pass my imperfection by.
Large streams from little fountains flow,
Tall oaks from little acorns grow.

DAVID EVERETT.

ON the 1st of December, 1804, Doctor Brown's tragedy of "Barbarossa" was revived at Covent Garden Theatre, for the purpose of introducing Master Betty, or, as he was called, the Infant Roscius, to a London audience. In this play, according to the critics of the day, the character of Achmet is almost everything.

His mother Zaphira and his lady-love Irene divide but a small part of the interest; and the declamatory rage of the tyrant Barbarossa is incapable of producing any strong effect upon the audience. The character of Achmet, on the contrary, abounds with a variety of deeply interesting situations, and partakes, only in a small degree, of the general imperfections of the piece.

The loud fame which preceded Master Betty's arrival in London produced a degree of curiosity unknown in the annals of the theatrical world. So early as twelve o'clock in the day the approaches to the various parts of the theatre were besieged with people clamorous for admission, and between one and two they became densely crowded. An introductory address was written by Mr. Taylor, but the noise and clamour were so great that it was impossible to ascertain how or to what extent Mr. Charles Kemble was able to deliver it. The scene then opened, but the tumult did not subside. The audience were all impatient for a view of the only object which they thought worth enjoying. At the end of the second act expectation was

raised to its highest pitch, and the Infant Roscius presented himself amidst a thunder of applause. He received the enthusiastic greetings of the audience with a prepossessing modesty, and then proceeded with the business of the stage.

He introduced himself to Barbarossa with judgment, and showed great discrimination in the same scene where he sounds Othman, and, finding him loyal and attached to his person, discovers himself in these words :

“ I do command thy faith, and, since thou lov’st him,
I’ll whisper to thee that, with honest guile,
I have deceiv’d this tyrant, Barbarossa—
Selim is yet alive!”

Nothing could be more beautiful than the manner in which he conceived and executed this passage. His mistrust and anxiety in the beginning of his conversation with Othman, and the joy brightening upon his countenance when he finds him true, broke into a blaze as he pronounced

“ Selim is yet alive!”

This single line evinced his powers, and put him in complete possession of the audience.

Throughout the whole of the performance he received the most rapturous applause, and the curtain dropped amidst the loudest plaudits that ever shook the walls of a theatre.

Master Betty's appearance was prepossessing in a very great degree. At the period I write of he was about fourteen years of age. He had a fair complexion, fair hair, and a fine blue eye. There was nothing striking in his face when unmoved, but when roused and livid with passion it was wonderfully expressive; his eye was then as Irene described it:

“Bright as the morning star!”

Every feature was lighted up with the holy phrenzy of one inspired. His smile was irresistible in the scenes where he proved the loyalty of Othman and the virtue of Zaphira. Every action was graceful and appropriate. He trod the stage with dignity and firmness, and had an air of majesty, in which all idea of his youth and size was lost or forgotten. He delineated all the various and contending passions with the nicest discrimination; never mixing or confounding them, but marking even the

finest shades with all the strength of contrasted colours. Of the business of the stage he was a perfect master ; the scene filled all his mind. He seemed not conscious of a present audience, yet there was no appearance of labour or study ; everything flowed, as it were, spontaneously, and in seizing the feelings of the audience he carried them away without any apparent exertion.

Some years after I saw Master Betty as Hamlet ; and I considered it a wonderful performance for a youth who had not attained his nineteenth year. Some of the plaintive tones of the young Roscius were the most admired in the compass of his voice, and the most successful in winning their way to the hearts of his audience. The words, therefore,

“ A little more than kin, and less than kind,”

were peculiarly adapted to make a favourable impression, which was well followed up by the answer immediately following to the queen ; beginning with :

“ Seems, madam ! nay, it is ; I know not seems.
’Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother.”

Next followed the famous soliloquy:

“Oh ! that this too, too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew !”

Of all the parts that constitute the character of Hamlet, his soliloquies are the most universally admired. The deep and philosophical turn of the sentiment, its natural and unaffected piety, the devout and holy spirit that it breathes, and the figurative language in which it is expressed, rank among the most sublime efforts of the genius of Shakespeare. But the soliloquies are not only the most ornamental parts of Hamlet, it is in them his character is best unfolded. They present the intellectual eye turned upon itself, exploring all the avenues and recesses of the heart, and a mind filled with study and reflection.

Divested of the soliloquies, the philosopher and the scholar is only a pious son filled with the just sense of a mother’s shame and an ardent zeal to avenge a father’s murder. The merits of the performance must therefore be estimated by reference to the soliloquies; and here the Young Roscius fell considerably short

of his usual excellence. In his delineation of the first soliloquy, his manner was vapid to an excess thoroughly inconsistent with that solemn dignity of deportment which it demands. Some passages of it, indeed, betrayed a total want of discrimination, and the words,

"Why, she would hang on him,
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on,"

were given with the air and emphasis of one unconscious of their meaning. This observation applies with the same force to his delivery of all the other soliloquies. They were also liable to another strong objection which, at his early years, may fairly be considered more the fault of his instructor than his own. Of all the business of the stage, soliloquy has the least to do with action. In it the mind's eye is turned upon itself, the actor holds converse with his own heart. He has no audience, no companion, but such as accompany him in the solitude of his chamber. Hamlet, particularly, has nothing to which to address himself but his conscience and his God. Instead, however, of the outward appearance of deep thought, the sober solemn-

nity of meditation in which soliloquy is conceived, there was no part of the character in which the Young Roscius displayed so much action. His enunciation was rapid and violent, and his gesticulation frequently more than kept pace with his words. This may be deemed hypercriticism, but every sound judge of histrionic art must acknowledge the rule which we have laid down to be correct.

The subsequent part of the same scene, though interspersed with beauties, occasionally left something to be wished for. The passage,

“He was a man, take him for all in all,
I shall not look upon his like again,”

although capable of producing great effect, was given in a light and superficial manner. His interrogatories respecting his father’s ghost were also put to Horatio with a flippancy inconsistent with the magnitude of the subject, and the supposed working of his mind at the time. When we want to be informed upon a subject of importance, and the party is known to be capable of giving the necessary information, then the questions may follow in a rapid course;

but that is not Hamlet's case. He doubts the truth of the report of his father's spirit in arms, and during the whole of the conversation he is weighing the evidence and exercising his judgment upon the answers.

The conclusion of the scene with the ghost was well managed, and when he breaks from Marcellas and Horatio to follow it, he gave the words,

" My fate cries out,
And makes each petty artery in this body
As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve,"

with uncommon force and animation. The scene with the players was well conceived, and given in excellent style. He drew down a thunder of applause in that part of it where he expresses his contempt for theatrical rank.

In the closet scene he shone with all the excellence that distinguishes his most admired characters. Here he has a subject suited to his years; a sense of a mother's shame and a father's wrongs may well live in the breast of a youth of fifteen. He was finely impassioned, full of energy and feeling. Had he shown more

exultation when he fancies he has killed the king and finds he has slain Polonius, the scene would have been admirable. The scene of the mock play was well supported; but the last was, perhaps, the best of his whole performance. He fenced with extraordinary grace, and rendered every part of it deeply interesting and affecting.

I was much too young to form a solid judgment upon Master Betty's acting on his first appearance in "Barbarossa;" all I remember was the enthusiastic cheering that followed his appearance in the second act. The boyish horror I felt at the murder of Barbarossa, the delight I experienced when young Selim was restored to his mother's arms, the glitter of the pageant, the splendid scenes in the royal palace of Algiers, the female slaves, the Turkish guards, attracted my attention more than the light-haired, bright-eyed youth, at that period the darling of the British public. Some years afterwards I saw the Infant Roscius in the same play, and then thought how absurd it was to allow a boy of eleven years of age to perform

grown-up characters. What could be more ridiculous than when he thus addressed Irene :

“ It was my hope
That time had veiled all semblance of my youth,
And thrown the mask of manhood in my visage.”

Again, when Zaphira, in referring to the object of Selim’s love, Irene, exclaims :

“ Thy throne be hers,
She merits all thy love ;”

thus uniting a youth of tender years to a full-grown princess.

Absurd as was, in consequence of his youth, Master Betty’s representation of the generous youth Selim, it was a hundredfold more so when he appeared as the Peruvian hero Rolla in “Pizarro.” The only character for which he was at all suited was Young Norval in “Douglas,” but even in that part it was impossible to refrain from smiling in the scene when the proud yet treacherous leader of Randolph’s troops, Glenalvon, dares him to mortal combat, he exclaims,

“ Villain, no more,
Draw and defend thy life.”

Again, when the youthful Douglas exclaims,

“ My country’s foes must witness who I am,
On the invaders’ heads I’ll prove my birth,”

few could help feeling that the threat, like the deliverer of it, was puerile.

CHAPTER VII.

NELL GWYNN—PEG WOFFINGTON—MRS. ABINGDON—BEAUTIFUL ACTRESSES—JAMES SMITH'S EPIGRAM ON MRS. HONEY—ASPIRANTS FOR THE STAGE—MARRIAGE OF ACTRESSES WITH NOBLEMEN—ANECDOTE OF THE LATE LORD GRAVES AND ALFRED BUNN—THE TURKISH QUESTION.

“Socrates called beauty a short-lived tyranny; Plato, privilege of nature; Theophrastus, a silent cheat; Theonitus, a delightful prejudice; Carcades, a solitary kingdom; Domitian said that nothing was more grateful; Aristotle affirmed that beauty was better than all the letters of recommendation in the world; Homer that 'twas a glorious gift of nature; and Ovid calls it a favour bestowed by the gods.”

MANY popular actresses have sprung from humble origin; among them may be mentioned the charming Nell Gwynn, the incomparable Peg Woffington, and the fascinating Mrs. Abingdon. The last-mentioned lady was the daughter of a private soldier in the King's

Guards, and as Fanny Barton, her maiden name, sold flowers to the fashionable loungers of Pall Mall and St. James's Park. She afterwards became the servant of a French milliner in Cockspur Street, and subsequently entered the service of Mr. Baddeley, an admired actor of that day.

Having acquired a considerable knowledge of the French language during her residence in Cockspur Street, and anxious to turn it to account, she devoted herself to study, and, by dint of industry and natural intelligence, became well acquainted with the works of French and English authors. In the summer of 1755, Fanny Barton, then in her nineteenth year, made her first appearance at the Haymarket Theatre as Miranda in "The Busy-Body," and appeared subsequently as Miss Jenny in "The Provoked Husband," Kitty Pry in "The Lying Valet," as Desdemona in "Othello," as Sylvia in "The Recruiting Officer," as Prince Prettyman in "The Rehearsal," and other comedy parts.

After a provincial tour, she in 1756 became a member of the Drury Lane Company, and reappeared on the London boards as Lady Pliant

in “The Double-Dealer.” She was now Mrs. Abingdon, having married her music-master. Little harmony seems, however, to have prevailed between them, and before long they were separated by a mutual arrangement, in which she consented to pay him annually a stipulated sum, if he forbore to cross her path or molest her in any way.

At Drury Lane Mrs. Abingdon had to contend against two formidable rivals and great favourites of the public, Mrs. Pritchard and Mrs. Clive; under these circumstances, she felt it advisable to quit London for a time, and accepted an engagement at the Smock Alley Theatre, Dublin. Her success as Miss Kitty in “High Life Below Stairs” was unequivocal, and was only equalled by her representation of Lady Townley.

So great was the *furore* created by this true daughter of Thalia, both by her acting, her talent, and her exquisite taste in dress, that the most fashionable ornaments were distinguished by her name, and the “Abingdon” cap became the prevailing rage of the *élite* of society.

After remaining five years in Ireland, she

returned to Drury Lane, where she obtained possession of all the leading characters in comedy, Mrs. Pritchard having retired from the stage, shortly afterwards followed by Mrs. Clive. So versatile were the talents of Mrs. Abingdon that she appeared in the Shakespearian characters of Portia, Desdemona, Ophelia, Beatrice, and Olivia; in high comedy as Lady Townley, Lady Betty Modish, Lady Millamont, Charlotte in "The Hypocrite," Lydia Languish in "The Rivals;" and in opera and farce as Lucy Lockit, Polly Peachem, Biddy Tipkin, Mrs. Termagant, Roxalana in "The Glutton," Miss Price in "Love for Love," and Miss Hozitin.

Mrs. Abingdon was the original Lady Teazle in Sheridan's masterpiece, "The School for Scandal," and her acting met with the full approval of the author and the playgoers of his time. In 1782 Mrs. Abingdon closed her long connection with Drury Lane, and transferred her services to the rival establishment of Covent Garden. After an absence for some years, she returned to the London stage, considerably impaired by time. Her last appearance was in

1799, for the benefit of a brother-artist, Pope, when she played Lady Racket in “Three Weeks After Marriage.” Her salary at Drury Lane during the zenith of her glorious career was twelve pounds a week, a benefit, and sixty pounds for dresses. Mrs. Abingdon died in 1815, “the world forgetting, by the world forgot.” Many other instances might be quoted; but we pass to a more agreeable topic.

The stage can boast of many beautiful women who adorned the boards—I speak only of those whom I had the pleasure of seeing or knowing. First on the list was the majestic Siddons, whose classical features were well adapted to the characters she undertook: the regal Constance, the ill-fated Catherine of Aragon, the noble Volumnia, the penitent Mrs. Haller, the imperious Lady Macbeth. Then again, Miss O’Neill, another daughter of Melpomene, was lovely; in passion and in tenderness none could equal her. Witness her delineation of the love-inspired Juliet, the gentle Desdemona, the sorrowing Lady Randolph, the spotless Cora. In comedy she was equally great, whether as the jealous wife, Mrs. Oakley, the lively

Beatrice, or the countryfied Lady Teazle. Mrs. Jordan's countenance was all sunshine and joy. Miss Bolton, who married Lord Thurlow, was extremely pretty, and looked the part of Anne Boleyn to perfection. Miss Brunton, afterwards Mrs. Yates, possessed beauty of no ordinary type. Mrs. Mardyn's form and features were faultless. Mrs. Robinson (not Perdita), who afterwards married Sir Charles Felix Smith of the Royal Engineers, rivalled the Mardyn in looks. Nor ought the simple and pleasing looks of Miss Stephens, the present Dowager Countess of Essex, or the grace of Mrs. Charles Kean, be omitted. In personal charms few could exceed Miss Chester, and, as far as looks went, she did ample justice to the parts allotted her. There was, however, more art than nature about her acting. Madame Vestris's figure was faultless; there was a brightness about her that charmed many. Of Miss Love it may be said the following lines were applicable to her:—

“In vain conceal'd they lie,
Love tracks them everywhere;
In vain aloft they fly,
Love shoots them flying there.

“ Love is a hunter-boy,
 Who makes young hearts his prey,
 And in his nets of joy
 Ensnakes them night and day.”

Mrs. Honey took a first rank in what might be strictly termed “ professional beauties,” a term perverted in the present day, and applied to ladies who, beautiful as they are, have no claim to the title of professional. I am here reminded of an epigram of James Smith, which, clever as it is, does not appear in his printed works, and which was written upon the above lady, who possessed that most unfortunate appendage, a jealous husband, but who, I firmly believe, was not the character the satirist with, I presume, what is called “ poetical licence ” makes him :

“ This pair in matrimony
 Go most unequal snacks,
 He gets all the *Honey*,
 She gets all the *whacks* (wax).”

Mrs. Nisbett was a splendid creature, full of life, vivacity, and feeling. No wonder the world was at her feet. She married first poor Nisbett of the Life Guards, who was killed by an

accident from a buggy ; afterwards she became Lady Boothby.

I have now completed, as far as my memory serves me, a catalogue of stage beauties, and it is gratifying to record that, in the majority of instances, the words of Shakespeare were applicable to them—"Their outward graces were placed amidst the thoughts and counsels of their hearts."

Whether from ambition to gain high rank in their profession, or a distant hope of making splendid fortunes and marriages, I know not; but this I can vouch for, and that is that there never was a period when there were more aspirants for dramatic fame than the present, and many a young lady who has in her own estimation and in that of her friends shone as a brilliant star among amateurs considers herself calculated to make a lasting impression on the boards of a theatre. The difficulties attending the early career of an actress are, in the mind of the novice, soon got over. She little thinks of the assurance (I cannot qualify the word) necessary to face a numerous audience, who, unlike that at a private play, have paid to witness a credit-

able performance. The public, however indulgent to the timidity attending a *début*, are hardly complaisant enough to allow for the repetition of the enfeebled tones, the hesitating voice, and the unconnected, half-pronounced speeches of an imperfect performer. She is not aware of the difficulty attending an accurate comprehension of the part, and that to succeed she must, during the representation, be the very character she is called to support.

Setting the above aside, so sure as merit exists, so certainly does it excite envy; the greater the talents the more numerous their opposers, and in how many ways may it operate! A purposed omission on the part of an insidious enemy who fails to give the proper cue, an untimely hiss, or, what is as bad, a plaudit where nothing in the speech could possibly merit it, an ill-natured remark made *sotto voce* in the green-room, but heard by the *débutante*, an invidious paragraph in the newspapers—in fact, there are so many modes of intimidating a novice that a full enumeration seems almost impossible.

In bygone days, it was not from before the

curtain only that the amateur received his knowledge of the drama. There was no great difficulty in the way of his securing the privileges of the green-room. Whether this apartment obtained its colour from its non-professional visitors, this deponeth sayeth not; but assuredly the exceeding verdure of some was sufficient to warrant such an application. Young men of family—and old men, too—were constantly to be seen there, generally on very friendly terms with some of the principal performers, the ladies naturally having the preference. Between them and the latter very intimate relations were either expressed or understood; in several instances this led to a marriage.

It is well known that some of the highest members of the English peerage have found wives in the theatre, and the example was not lost sight of. The Duchess of Bolton and the Countesses of Derby and Craven had drawn prizes in the theatrical lottery which induced their fascinating successors to hope that they also might be as fortunate; subsequently Miss Bolton and Miss Stevens were added to the

peerage, Miss O'Neill to the baronetage, where they were as much admired as they had previously been on the boards. Miss Mellon attracted one of the wealthiest bankers in London, and, by her union with Mr. Coutts, the stage lost almost a second Mrs. Jordan.

To resume; fortunately for the drama and the patrons, notwithstanding the above-mentioned marriages, the supply appeared to keep pace with the demand. There seemed to be always plenty of pretty women who could act delightfully, sing charmingly, dance exquisitely, and look divinely. It not unfrequently happened that some of them were secured by actors or other persons connected with the stage. In this way Miss De Camp became Mrs. Charles Kemble, Miss Tyer Mrs. Liston, Miss Bartolozzi Madame Vestris, Miss Brunton Mrs. Yates, Miss Ellen Tree Mrs. Charles Kean.

Mrs. Charles Kemble was as much an ornament to her husband's drawing-room as ever she had been to the green-room of the theatre. They lived in the house that had formerly been Edmund Burke's, in Gerrard Street, Soho, the one in which previously Lord Lyttleton's ghost

had summoned his lordship to another and better world. Here they gave frequent parties, that were attended by persons of distinction of both sexes. Unfortunately, the admiration her husband caused among the ladies of fashion was a source of terrible disquietude to her; she had fits of jealousy, during which she would absent herself from home. She went into the country—at least, that was her idea—but the limit of her journey was Bayswater, then a medley of suburban cottages and market-gardens, long since obliterated by the brick and mortar of Tyburnia.

The manager of the theatre in which both had engagements was well aware of their quarrels and separations, and, by way of remedy, cast them both for the two principal characters, Mr. and Mrs. Oakley, in “*The Jealous Wife*.” They were obliged to appear together, and never was a comedy played with more spirit. There was a temporary reconciliation; but, as certain ladies would continue to display their interest in the popular actor by all kinds of delicate attentions, his wife would repeat her bursts of indignation and her jour-

neys to her Bayswater retreat. After a time the feeling of jealousy wore off, and a happier couple or more kind and affectionate parents never existed.

I have referred to the *habitués* of the green-room, the *coureurs des coulisses*, as they are termed in France, and am reminded of an amusing incident that occurred during the period Alfred Bunn ruled over the destinies of Drury Lane. In the opera of "Gustavus" a masked ball was introduced, and those men about town who had engaged stalls or boxes had the privilege of going on the stage either in character or in domino. Among them was the late Lord Graves, who, upon entering the green-room preparatory to the ball scene, saw a gentleman dressed as a Turk sitting in great state on one of the sofas, surrounded by masks in different costumes.

"Who is that gentleman," asked his lordship, "to whom so many are paying court?"

"Don't you know?" responded a friend, a wicked wag. "That is the Turkish ambassador, who has just descended from the Queen's box

to pay his respects to the manager of Old Drury."

Graves approached the Grand Turk, made a formal bow, and entered into conversation with him. After a time he began to criticise the *mise en scène*, the *corps de ballet*, which he pronounced to be far inferior to that of foreign theatres, feeling assured that at Constantinople much more attention was paid to the above. The Turk kept bowing his head, shrugging his shoulders, while a suppressed laugh went round the room.

"Ladies and gentlemen for the masquerade scene," shouted the call-boy, as he entered the room.

"Will your excellency honour me with your arm?" asked Lord Graves.

"To be sure I will," responded the other, in pure English tongue; "and another time, when you come behind my scenes," he added, "I trust you will not censure the management."

"What, Bunn!" exclaimed the horrified nobleman.

"Yes—the poet Bunn, as that wicked news-

paper calls me, lessee and manager of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane."

An apology followed, and peace was proclaimed between England and Turkey.

CHAPTER VIII.

PATENT THEATRES—POPULAR TITLES TO PLAYS OF THE LEGITIMATE DRAMA—COVENT GARDEN—ITS CORPS DRAMATIQUE—TRAGIC EVENTS—DRURY LANE—CELEBRATED PERFORMERS—ELLISTON AND MADAME VESTRIS—FIRST PLAYBILL ISSUED FROM THIS THEATRE—THE HAYMARKET THEATRE—ENGLISH OPERA HOUSE—THE PRESENT LYCEUM—THE ADELPHI, FORMERLY THE SANSPAREIL, ST. JAMES'S, PRINCESS'S, OLYMPIC, STRAND THEATRES—ASTLEY'S AMPHITHEATRE, VICTORIA, FORMERLY THE ROYAL COBURG, SADLER'S WELLS, PRINCE OF WALES'S, ROYALTY, AND MARYLEBONE THEATRES—VAUDEVILLE, GAIETY, GLOBE, OPERA COMIQUE THEATRES.

The stage I chose, a subject fair and free—
 'Tis yours, 'tis mine, 'tis public property.
 All common exhibitions open lie
 For praise or censure to the common eye ;
 Hence are a thousand hackney writers fed,
 Hence monthly critics earn their daily bread ;
 This is a general tax which all must pay,
 From those who scribble down to those who play.

CHURCHILL.

FOR many years the two patent theatres, Covent Garden and Drury Lane, were

alone permitted to represent the plays of Shakespeare ; happily, that monopoly has ceased to exist, and the works of the immortal bard may now be nightly seen at the Lyceum, the Imperial, Sadler's Wells, and occasionally at Drury Lane, where lately Miss Litton's talented company represented "As You Like It" in a manner that was never excelled in bygone days. The late Mrs. Bateman, too, at Sadler's Wells, attracted large audiences by bringing out Shakespeare's plays ; this lady seems to have felt with Ben Jonson :

"Sweet Swan of Avon ! what a sight it were
To see thee in our water yet appear !"

The sight has been realised, and the "Swan of Avon," somewhat ruffled by the neglect and slights of the beauties of the west end of the town, now glides majestically with the stream near the New River Head, amidst the smiles and plaudits of the *Angels* of Islington. So strict were the managers of the patent theatres that any infringement of their right was (as they say of trespassers) prosecuted "with the utmost rigour of the law." Occasionally these rights

were evaded. I myself have seen "Macbeth" acted as a burletta at the Royal Circus, with a pianoforte accompaniment, and it was said that the name of some celebrated play was altered to one not likely to catch the ear of the Licensor. Thus, according to the wags of the day, "Othello" was performed under the title of "Is He Jealous?" "Romeo and Juliet" under that of "How to Die for Love," "Macbeth" as "Murder Will Out," "The Comedy of Errors" as "Who is Who, or As Like as Two Peas," "The Merchant of Venice" as "Diamond Cut Diamond," "Taming of the Shrew" as "A Conjugal Lesson," "Hamlet" as "Methinks I See My Father."

A *précis* of the different London theatres may not be uninteresting, and I am indebted to that valuable work, "The Dictionary of Dates," for much information upon the subject.

Covent Garden received its patent in 1662, and was opened by Rich in 1732. In 1735 the Beef Steak Club was founded by Rich and Larter. Mr. Harris's tenure commenced in 1767, that of John Philip Kemble in 1802. In 1808 the theatre was burnt down, re-built by R.

Smirke, R.A., and re-opened in 1809, the celebrated O. P. Riot following its opening. Henry Harris's management commenced in 1818. Charles Kemble succeeded him in 1823, Macready in 1837, Madame Vestris, afterwards Mrs. Charles Mathews, in 1839. Again, in 1842, Charles Kemble renewed his management, which lasted until 1844, when M. Laurent took the reins of government. In 1847 the theatre was converted into an Italian Opera House, and in 1856, after a *bal masqué*, was again destroyed by fire. The new theatre was opened as The Royal Italian Opera by Mr. F. Gye in 1858. This theatre witnessed the first appearance of Lewis in the character of Belcour, of Jack Johnstone in Irish characters, of Munden, of Fawcett, of G. F. Cooke in "Richard III.," of Braham, of Master Betty, of Miss Stevens, the present Dowager Countess of Essex, as Mandane, of Miss Foote, afterwards Countess of Harrington, as Amanthis in "The Child of Nature," of Miss O'Neill as Juliet, of Macready as Orestes, of Fanny Kemble as Juliet, of her sister, Adelaide Kemble, as Norma. It also witnessed the farewell nights of Lewis as the

Copper Captain, of Mrs. Siddons, who, however, performed one night afterwards for Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kemble's benefit, of J. P. Kemble as Coriolanus, of Fawcett and Charles Young.

Two tragic events occurred at Covent Garden. Miss Reay was killed by Mr. Hackman in 1779 as she was leaving the house, and Miss Kelly was fired at by George Barnet in the theatre, February, 1816.

Killigrew obtained a patent for Drury Lane in 1662, opened that theatre in the following year, and it was burnt down in 1671. Re-built by Sir Christopher Wren, and opened 1674. In 1747, during Garrick and Lacy's tenure, Shakespeare was revived. In 1775 the interior was re-built by Adams, and opened on the 23rd of September. Sheridan next became manager, when, in 1794, the theatre was re-built on a larger scale and re-opened. In 1809 it was burnt down; re-built by Wyatt, and re-opened in 1812 with a prologue by Lord Byron. The witty effusion by the Brothers Horace and James Smith, entitled "The Rejected Addresses," was published at this time, and created a perfect *furore* in literary and theatri-

cal society. Robert William Elliston became lessee in 1819, who was succeeded by Stephen Price in 1826. In 1830 Mr. Alexander Lee and Captain Polhill became joint managers, followed by Mr. Bunn in 1831. In 1839 he retired in favour of Mr. Hammond, but again became lessee in 1843. In 1849 Mr. Anderson commenced management, but, after a short and a not very merry reign, gave way to Mr. Bunn as lessee and manager. Mr. E. T. Smith opened the theatre in 1860, but it suddenly closed during the following year. Mr. F. B. Chatterton followed Mr. Smith, and at the present moment Mr. Augustus Harris reigns supreme. In 1666 Nell Gwynn appeared on the boards of Drury Lane. In 1782 Mrs. Siddons made her *début* as a *star*, and in the following year John Kemble appeared as Hamlet. In 1794 Charles Kemble made his first appearance as Malcolm. In 1796 Dowton also made his first appearance; the character selected for him was Sheva in “The Jew.” In 1814 the great Edmund Kean appeared as Shylock, and took the town by storm. In 1820 Madame Vestris commenced her brilliant career as Lilla in “The Siege of

Belgrade." In 1826 Miss Ellen Tree appeared as Violante in "The Wonder," and in the following year her future husband, Charles Kean, made his *début* as Young Norval in Home's tragedy of "Douglas." In 1829 Mrs. Nisbett delighted the town by the captivating spirit she threw into "The Widow Cheerly." Forrest in 1836 appeared as Spartacus, and another eminent tragedian, G. V. Brooke, appeared in 1861 as Othello. On the boards of Old Drury in 1776 Garrick made his farewell bow, and in 1851 Macready took leave of the stage.

A tragical event occurred in 1844. Clara Webster, a popular *artiste*, was burnt on the stage, December 14th, and died on the 16th of that month.

I have referred to Elliston, whose management commenced on the 3rd of October, 1819, and terminated early in 1826. I am here reminded of an accidental circumstance which brought about the engagement of one of the most popular singers and actresses of the day, Madame Vestris. This lady had appeared on the Italian stage at the Opera House in the Haymarket, and at the French plays given at

the then popular Argyll Rooms in Regent Street. Her ambition, however, was to appear on the English boards ; she had in vain tried to get an engagement. One evening, when I was leaving the private box entrance at Drury Lane, I saw two ladies, evidently waiting for their carriage. It was a dark, stormy, wintry night ; hackney-coaches were scarce, four-wheelers and Hansom cabs were not then in prospective existence, and there seemed little prospect of getting one of the above-mentioned vehicles.

Addressing the ladies, I said that, if their carriage did not come, they were welcome to have the hackney-coach I had sent the link-boy to procure for me, and that, in the meantime, I advised them to return to their box, which was on the pit tier. This they did, and in course of conversation I discovered that one of the ladies was Madame Vestris, who was most anxious to be introduced to the great Robert William Elliston. While expressing my willingness to take an early opportunity of forwarding Madame Vestris's views, no less a personage than the lessee himself came down from the

back of the stage towards the foot-lights, which were nearly extinguished.

“Firemen,” he exclaimed, in a loud, pompous tone, “see all lights put out! I hear some voices in that box.”

“Yes, Mr. Elliston,” I replied. “I am here with a lady who is most anxious to be presented to you. You’ve not forgotten me, Lord William Lennox?”

“Delighted, my lord, to see you.”

He came into the box, seemed delighted at Madame Vestris’s looks, engaged her then and there, and early in the following February this lady made a most successful *début* at Drury Lane. The old proverb, “It’s an ill wind that blows nobody good,” was realised; for, owing to the storm of a December night, the long-wished-for engagement was brought about, much to the satisfaction of the lessee, the public, and, last not least, the lady herself.

Before I conclude this notice, I may remark that the first play-bill, dated April 8th, 1665, was issued from Drury Lane. It ran as follows: “By his Majestie, his company of comedians at the new theatre in Drury Lane, will be acted a

comedy called ‘The Humorous Lieutenant.’” After detailing the characters, it concludes thus: “The play will begin at three o’clock exactly.”

The Haymarket Theatre was built in 1702, for which in 1747 Mr. Foote obtained a patent. It was re-built in 1767, and in the following year Mr. Colman became tenant. In 1805 the management was undertaken by Mr. Morris. In 1820 it was re-built by Nash, and opened on the 4th of July, 1821. In 1837 Mr. Webster became manager, and his management (sixteen years) terminated in 1853, when Buckstone succeeded him. It has now been altered, re-fitted, and opened by Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft, and is by far the best arranged theatre in the metropolis; some unpleasant feeling was excited at the pit being converted into stalls, but that has passed away, and prosperity appears to attend the new management. The boards of this theatre, from its opening to the present time, have been trod by the best artists of the day. Here Gay’s “Beggar’s Opera” was produced in 1727; here Miss Farren, afterwards

Countess of Derby, delighted her audiences by her admirable delineations of high comedy ; here Elliston appeared to the greatest advantage, as did the elder Mathews and Liston, of whom it may be said, in the words of Sheridan, “Sure, such a pair were never seen ;” here the classical Charles Young, the clever Fanny Kelly, the dignified Macready, the talented Charles Kean, displayed to great perfection their histrionic art. In 1738, through the illiberality of the English public, a French company were prohibited from acting. Here in 1748 a charlatan announced that he would jump into a quart bottle ; the theatre was besieged by ten thousand persons, anxious to gain admittance and witness the feat. The duped crowd, in the storm of their indignation, nearly pulled down the edifice. In 1794, on the occasion of a royal visit, so great was the crowd that sixteen persons were killed and many wounded.

Few theatres have undergone greater changes than the English Opera House, or Lyceum. It was built in 1794-5 by Dr. Arnold, and opened as the Lyceum in 1809 ; it was destroyed by

fire in 1830, re-built and re-opened in 1834 ; in 1844 Mrs. Keeley became the manageress, and was succeeded by Madame Vestris and Mr. Charles Mathews from 1847 to 1856 ; in 1857 it was taken by Mr. Gye for Italian operas for forty nights, and in September of the same year was opened for English opera by Miss Louisa Pyne and Mr. Harrison, when Balfé's opera of "The Rose of Castile" was produced. Mr. G. Webster and Mr. Falconer held it for a brief period, and resigned in favour of Madame Celeste ; in 1861 Mr. Falconer opened it for English comedy. It is now under the able management of Mr. Irving, whose exertions to support the Shakespearian drama have been duly appreciated by the public. It was here that Winsor, the pioneer of that wonderful illuminating power of gas, first tried his experiment in 1803-4. In 1844 there were equestrian performances at this theatre, and on its boards those celebrated foreign artists, Madame Ristori and Fechter, appeared.

The Adelphi Theatre, formerly called the "Sans Pareil," was opened under the management of Mr. and Miss Scott in 1806 ; so popular

was this lady that she was known as "The guardian Naiad of the Strand," thus parodying a line of Walter Scott's "Lady of the Lake." In 1820 Rodwell and Jones became joint managers, and gave it its present name. Terry and Yates followed in 1825, and were succeeded by Madame Celeste in 1844; in 1858 it was re-built, and in 1854 Benjamin Webster became manager. Messrs. Gatti are now the managers. Among the artists that have appeared on its boards may be mentioned Miss Scott, the "heroine of domestic tragedy," whose Mary, in "Mary, the Maid of the Inn," produced a great sensation. Since her day, Madame Celeste, Mrs. Honey, Mrs. Mellon, Miss Furtado, Terry, Yates, T. P. Cooke, Paul Bedford, John Reeve, B. Webster, Fernandez, the Bourcicauts.

The St. James's Theatre was built by, and opened under the management of, Braham in 1835. In 1840 German operas were introduced by Mr. Bunn, and in 1844 Mr. Mitchell, the popular librarian of Bond Street, became lessee. Under his management French plays were represented with the greatest success. Mrs. Seymour, F. Chatterton, and Alfred Wigan at

different periods became managers, and at the present time Mr. and Mrs. Kendal are reaping the benefit of well-earned fame as managers and actors.

The Princess's Theatre, formerly a bazaar, was opened in 1840. During Charles Kean's management many of Shakespeare's plays were acted in a manner alike creditable to the lessee and the artists. This theatre has recently been re-built.

The Olympic has undergone many changes since it was erected by Mr. Astley, and opened with horsemanship. In 1849 it was destroyed by fire, rebuilt and opened in 1850. Among the managers may be mentioned Elliston, Madame Vestris, George Wild, Miss Davenport, Mr. Watts, Mr. W. Farren, Mr. A. Wigan, Robson, and Emden. It is now under the management of Miss Fanny Josephs, one of the most popular artists of the day.

The Strand Theatre was opened in 1831 by Mr. Rayner and Mrs. Waylett, who were succeeded by W. Farren (Allcroft lessee, manager Mr. T. Payne), Miss Swanborough, and is at present under the management of Mrs. Swan-

borough. In addition to many deeply interesting pieces, burlesques of the highest order have been here produced with the most brilliant success.

Astley's Amphitheatre, opened by Philip Astley in 1773, was destroyed by fire in 1794; rebuilt in 1795, burnt again in 1803. In 1841 it was again destroyed by fire; rebuilt and opened by Mr. Batty in 1843, since which it has had many managers, Sanger being the present lessee.

The Circus, now Surrey Theatre, was opened by Mr. Hughes for equestrian exercises in 1782, and opened for dramatic performances during the following year. It has been twice destroyed by fire. Elliston and Davidge have been the principal managers, though not superior to the present liberal lessee, Mr. Holland.

The Coburg, now Victoria, Theatre was erected and commenced under the patronage of the late Princess Charlotte and the Prince Leopold of Saxe Coburg in 1816, and was opened in 1818. For a length of time Glossop was manager; it was he who introduced a novelty in the shape of a glass curtain. This had the

effect of reflecting the entire audience, much to the delight of the occupiers of the galleries, who saw themselves, probably for the first time, as large as life, reflected by this splendid mirror. In 1833 Messrs. Egerton and Abbott embarked in the management, and were succeeded, in 1840, by Osbaldiston. The "Vic," as it is called by the patrons of it, has since been converted into a Temperance Music Hall.

Sadler's Wells was for many years the resort of the fashionable world, famed for its nautical dramas and the talents of the inimitable Joe Grimaldi. Under the management of Mrs. Warner and Mr. Phelps from 1844 to 1859, plays of Shakespeare were brought out in a manner that reflected greatly on the taste and liberality of the management. The late lessee, Mrs. S. F. Bateman, followed in the same track, and the new Sadler's Wells now ranks as high as any other metropolitan theatre. In 1807 a sad accident occurred, when eighteen persons were trampled to death on a false alarm of fire. In its palmy days of real water and pantomime, it had a peculiar speciality, namely, that the title of the performance

about to be represented was let down and displayed in bright letters on the proscenium under the royal arms.

The Queen's Theatre (as it was originally called) in Tottenham Court Road opened in 1828, and often changed its management. It never, however, became fashionable until Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft undertook the management of it. Under their able direction, the Prince of Wales's Theatre attained the greatest celebrity, and that celebrity is being kept up by the exquisite performance of Miss Geneviève Ward in "Forget-me-not."

Miss Kelly's theatre in Dean Street, Soho, now known as the Royalty, was opened in 1840; it has also had many managers, and many of the most popular pieces of the day have been produced here, notably those of "Black-eyed Susan" and "Little Don Juan."

The Marylebone Theatre was opened in 1842, and has had its successes and reverses. The National Standard, the New Grecian, and Britannia Theatres still retain their well-earned popularity.

Among the more modern theatres may be

mentioned the Court, the Opera Comique, the Criterion, the Gaiety, Vaudeville, Globe, Royal Connaught, Alhambra, Royal Park, and, last not least, the Folly, all of which, through able management, have attracted, and are attracting, large and appreciative audiences.

CHAPTER IX.

OLD PLAY-GOERS—THEIR PREJUDICES—PROLOGUES AND EPILOGUES—DRAMATIC PATRIOTISM—A COMIC SONG—ACTORS' SALARIES—LETTERS FROM RICHARD JONES AND CHARLES KEAN—THE LATTER ON A STARRING ENGAGEMENT.

A play ought to be a just image of human nature, representing its humours and the changes of fortune to which it is subject, for the delight and instruction of mankind.

DRYDEN.

MANY an old player talks of the by-gone palmy days of the Drama, and of its present degeneracy, but I venture to assert that there never was a time when better entertainment was provided for the public than at the present moment. We have excellent actors and actresses. It would be invidious to select anyone in particular. We have dramatic writers of the greatest ability; as for the auxiliaries of

scenery, dresses, and decorations, they are as superior to what our fathers and grandfathers were accustomed to as the bright jets of gas are to the dim rays of an old oil-lamp.

Grumblers there were, grumblers there are, and grumblers there ever will be, who have found fault, and will find fault, with the stage as it is. Let them refer to the play-bills of the early part of the present century, and, although I frankly admit the casts were strong, they will see there was little or no variety. A tragedy or comedy, followed by a farce or musical afterpiece, formed the nightly bill of fare at the two winter theatres; comedy and farce at the summer ones; melodramas and horsemanship at the transpontine theatres. A stranger now coming to London for two or three weeks will find every class of drama admirably well put upon the stage, and he may choose between tragedy, comedy, opera, operetta, farce, or burlesque. Then how great are the improvements as to scenery and costume, more especially in the latter; nor must the comfort of the audience be overlooked. In by-gone days it was necessary, after securing

places, to occupy them before the termination of the first act, and, as the curtain rose at half-past six, this entailed a very early dinner. Now the stalls are kept during the whole evening, giving the occupier ample time to enjoy a comparatively late dinner. As for scenery, dresses, and decorations, those of the present day are as superior to what they were in by-gone times as a portrait of Millais's is to a sign-post over a village inn ; indeed, some of our best scene-painters have proved themselves to be artists of the highest class. Without referring to living scene-painters whose works have gained them the highest artistic fame, Stanfield and Roberts' names are immortalised. With regard to "properties" in former days many a manager might exclaim with Mist, the manager in Colman's Epilogue to Reynold's comedy of "Management":

" My country playhouse, ere I come to town,
Almost knocked up, has been in lots knocked down.
A sturdy farmer bought the walls—what then ?
What was a barn, will be a barn again ;
Corn on the stage, not mummers, will be seen,
And oats be *thrashed* where actors should have been."

There was a custom in by-gone days of pre-

ceding every tragedy and comedy with a prologue, and concluding with an epilogue. Occasionally this custom extended to farces, for I find, when Kenney's admirable afterpiece of "Raising the Wind" was first represented at Covent Garden, the following prologue was spoken by Mr. Claremont:—

" Rules hard and various (so the critics choose)
Control the tragic and the comic muse ;
A polish'd air their classic steps should grace,
And sober caution must divert their pace ;
But Farce, with playful trip and frolic mien,
Gambols with licens'd freedom o'er the scene ;
The utmost efforts of her art design'd,
Should five long acts of woe depress the mind,
By broadest mirth to dissipate the gloom,
And send you smiling to your suppers home.
As yet a stranger to dramatic fame,
Our author hath invok'd her mirthful name ;
And since she best the critic brow unbends,
Begg'd him to introduce her to our friends,
Whim, as his title purports, is his view,
Yet he affects to have some moral too :
Raising the Wind—how various are the ways,
In life's precarious sea the wind to raise !
Yet still, by indolence or folly charm'd,
The trimmest barks are constantly becalm'd,
And oft by poverty pursu'd full chace,
The shifts of artifice their helms disgrace.
Now he would show that her unworthy force
Serves but to drive them farther from their course.

Sure none will doubt him ; yet in times like these,
Though vainly privateers may court the breezes,
Each bosom glows with patriot pride elate,
While scuds uncheck'd the vessel of the state,
While the *Britannia* proudly makes her way,
And Lloyd, her purser, tells us every day
That, while for glory bound she hoists her sail,
Britons can raise a never-ceasing gale.
May our new author claim the breath of praise,
And no dire squall of stormy censure raise.

(To the galleries.)

Ye gods ! who o'er our atmosphere preside—
Gods who the sins of authors loudly chide,
And, as become Olympians, when you please,
Can most effectually stir up a breeze,
This night espouse a young advent'r's cause,
And be tempestuous only in applause."

Dramatic patriotism was carried to a great extent in by-gone days, and when, in September, 1803, England was threatened with an invasion by the First Consul of France, nothing could exceed the loyalty of the people. At Drury Lane the season opened with "Pizarro," a drama remarkable for pomp and splendour, for boldness of action, for variety of event, and for wild generosity of sentiment.

The choice of such a piece was judicious and happy. It abounds in sentiments which are in perfect unison with that enthusiasm of patriot-

ism, honour, and generous bravery which at that period kindled every eye and influenced every heart.

The success which this play had previously commanded was, on the occasion referred to, again renewed. Many of the volunteers attended in their uniforms, the boxes were filled with elegantly-dressed women, anxious to prove that “none but the brave deserve the fair,” while the pit and galleries were crowded to excess. Attention was remarkably alive. Nothing, indeed, but a play adapted to awaken all the sympathies of patriotism could, at such a time, have engaged attention so lively and so constant as that which was given to this drama throughout the evening.

Every pernicious sentiment from “Pizarro” seemed to bring to mind the dark policy which was then generally believed to guide the conduct of the “Corsican Tyrant,” Bonaparte, as he was called—happily we have lived to see his descendants allied to us by every tie of affection and friendship—while the speeches breathing patriotism were received with loud and unanimous applause.

On the opening night of Covent Garden, previous to the play, Mr. Fawcett delivered the following loyal address, written by T. Dibdin, in allusion to the subscription at Lloyds :—

“ From Thespian Camps, where summer colours fly,
Return’d to winter quarters, here am I!
Proud of my mission, by the General sent,
To bid you welcome to our Royal tent—
To hope this favour’d field you’ll oft review,
Where many a battle will be fought for you—
To hope you’ll often greet, as heretofore,
With golden smiles the Covent Garden corps,
In *Fame’s Gazette*, perhaps, our mimic band
Has advertis’d some change in his command ;
Has told ye here a fav’rite chief you’ll find,
Vice another favourite resigned ;
And our new captain* we salute with pride,
Since by your judgment he’s approv’d as tried ;
Yet inclination, duty, each impel
To speak of him who lately rul’d so well ;
Who, tho’ he quit a truncheon for the ranks,
His mirthful efforts still shall ask your thanks,
And hold, while honoured here with approbation,
His post of honour in a private station.
Henceforth, when music shall essay the strain,
With all your best-lov’d songsters in her train,
When gay Thalia shall alternate court,
Your smiles be decked with flowers of frolic sport—
If laughter’s interval at times you’ll hear,
Melpomene petition for a tear.

* The new captain referred to was J. P. Kemble.

Thus artists render vivid tints more bright,
By blending shadow with opposing light ;
And, faith, our artists, thro' past days of heat,

(Pointing to the decorations,)

Have toil'd, your warmer patronage to meet.
Should you approve their pains to make us gay,
Haply, each morn, some modish dame may say,
'John, take a side box.' 'There's no room below.'
'No room at all ? Oh ! then I'm sure I'll go,
'Tis only empty places one avoids,
So, John, be sure we call to-day at Lloyds',
Where everybody runs to give their mite,
And, for a wonder, all are in the right.'
Then 'Speed the Plough,'* let's join with heart and hand,
Lords, ladies, gentle, simple, sea, and land ;
Each castle, village, city, ship, and town,
Should form a club to knock invaders down !
And ever may we boast this house brimful
Of friends determined to support John Bull,
And, should his desp'rate foes our fury brave,
We'll chant their requiem in loyal stave."

After delivering the above address, Mr. Fawcett entertained the audience with the following song (tune, "The Tight Little Island") :

" If the French have a notion
 Of crossing the ocean,
Their luck to be trying on dry land,
 They may come if they like,
 But we'll soon make them strike
 To the lads of the tight little Island.

* The play was Morton's "Speed the Plough."

Huzza for the boys of the Island,
The brave volunteers of the Island,
 The fraternal embrace
 If foes want in this place,
We'll present all the *arms* in the Island.

“They say we keep shops,
 To vend broadcloth and slops,
And of merchants they call us a sly band ;
 But, tho' war is their trade,
 What Briton's afraid
To say he'll ne'er sell 'em the Island ?
They'll pay pretty dear for the Island,
If fighting they want in the Island,
 We'll show 'em a sample
 Shall make an example
Of all who dare bid for the Island.

“If met they should be
 By the boys of the sea,
I'll warrant they'll never come nigh land.
 If they do, those on land
 Will soon lend 'em a hand
To foot it again from the Island.
Huzza for the King of the Island !
Shall our father be robbed of his Island ?
 While his children can fight
 They'll stand up for his right
And their own to the tight little Island.”

Wonderful changes have taken place respecting dramatic salaries. What amount the great Roman Roscius received I know not, but that

the juvenile Roscius was paid fifty pounds per night everyone knows; and at the very time John Kemble was engaged at thirty-six guineas a week, and Lewis twenty pounds for the same period. But Master Betty's pecuniary emoluments, when contrasted with those of others, are rendered more extraordinary; Betterton, in 1709, having only four pounds per week, and Lewis, in 1734, having only five and twenty shillings per night, which sums were considered adequate remuneration for transcendent talent.

A copy of a letter from Mr. Fawcett, stage manager of Covent Garden Theatre, to that excellent actor and teacher of elocution, Richard Jones, shows what salaries were early in the present century. For the following two letters we are indebted to the proprietor of the "Photographic Album."

"London, Friday, 24th April, 1807.

"MY DEAR JONES,

"I am authorized by Mr. Harris to give you your own terms, viz., twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen pounds,

for five years, and you are now considered engaged at Covent Garden. Every encouragement you can hope and desire will be given you. Your answer to ratify will be followed by an article. I wish you joy of a wonderful fine engagement. Best compliments to Mrs. Jones, and am,

“ Dear Dick,

“ Yours most truly,

“ J. FAWCETT.”

While a copy of one from Charles Kean to an intimate friend will give an idea of the profits of a starring engagement.

“ Glasgow, 5th March, 1842.

“ MY DEAR FRIEND,

“ As I feel you take an interest in my professional success, I send you, as a curiosity in these anti-theatrical days, the amount of the receipts of our first engagement as man and wife, and I should also feel very sensible of your kindness if you would publish a statement of the sum total in your journal, being convinced, from experience, that sums do more than *puffs*, accompanied by any remarks your own judgment and discretion might suggest.

"Two thousand six hundred and forty-four paid to the benefit. This at a time and in a place where people talk of distress and want of money. Do let this be put in circulation, for it is an instance of unparalleled success in the history of modern theatricals. Nearly £100 per night for our share is a thing not on record since my father's first season. We commence in Edinburgh on Monday, where I hear we are promised great things, but the theatre only holds £150 to £160.

"Yours sincerely,

“CHARLES KEAN.”

CHAPTER X.

HAYMARKET THEATRE—ROMEO COATES—THE DENOUEMENT—
“DIE AGAIN, ROMEO”—JULIET RISING FROM HER BIER—A
FEW REMARKS UPON FREE PASSES INTO THEATRES.

O, Romeo ! Romeo ! wherefore art thou Romeo ?

SHAKESPEARE.

THE boards of the Haymarket, and those of Covent Garden, were occasionally desecrated by the performance of Romeo Coates, who was described in the bills of the day as the “Amateur of Fashion.” At the Haymarket he constantly appeared as Romeo and Lothario ; at Covent Garden he contented himself with reciting “Bucks have at ye all.” This was the least offensive of his performances, inasmuch as it was the shortest. Like many others I could name, he was an amateur, not an actor,

and only a moderate amateur, exciting the risible faculties of his audience where their sympathies ought to have been moved. The dying scene in "Romeo and Juliet" was universally encored, amidst the shouts and jeers of the public, the cry from the galleries being, "Die again, Romeo." A celebrated critic has thus described the acting of Mr. Coates :

"Really folly is a most fatiguing thing ; its fantasticalness is so destitute of invention, its oddity is so without humour, its levity is so little instinct with spirit, that the most patient observer, however strong his taste for the ridiculous may be, in a very short time finds his relish dulled, and his laugh relaxed into a yawny simper. It is this that renders a foolish person so legitimate an object of compassion ; after a few absurd exhibitions his power of attraction entirely and rapidly fails ; he has no resources to re-animate departed notice ; he sinks into himself, becomes a mere blank, and though such a being, from his limited powers, is capable of only a small degree of misery, yet he is such a burden to himself that, if he cannot muster resolution to make his own '*quietus*

with a bare bodkin,' he must die of *ennui*, unless his horse will be good-natured enough to fling him and break his neck. These melancholy meditations were suggested by the fresh appearance of Mr. Coates at the Haymarket. This gentleman has for some time continued to draw on himself the eyes of the town by driving a curricle shaped like a tea-kettle, by his decided and ostentatious attachment to that magnanimous animal the cock, and lastly by thrusting his Quixotic form into the representation of lovers and heroes, he has engaged a considerable portion of the public attention. Yet this attention evidently begins to languish, and on Thursday, though his peculiarities were as prominent and his manner as astonishing as ever, in half an hour he seemed to lose his power of amusing, and the audience were driven to the necessity of framing bad jokes among themselves to keep alive their merriment. Yet it certainly is a most laughter-moving exhibition, and if, as some people say, the gods really made man to laugh at, they never had a finer opportunity of splitting their sides.

“The play of ‘The Fair Penitent’ opened,

and a tall, meagre youth (Attamont) began to whine, whilst a strange accompaniment, in the shape of Horatio, squeaked in response; then came Sciotto, who, to add a variety to the concert, forgot the dignity of the Roman father, and fairly barked through his part. Next darted on the stage, badly dressed in white satin, an ungainly figure, loose-limbed and stooping in the shoulders, its legs thrust out like the knave of clubs, and its head shaking like a Mandarin on a chimney slab. In the name of Apollo, can this be ‘that haughty, gallant, gay Lothario?’—that ‘dear perfidious?’ Where is the lady that could fall a victim to such a seducer? Behold her! a thin, fantastic figure, who floated about the stage with singular velocity, very different from the line of grace, and whose voice was less substantial than that of a disembodied spirit. The seducer and the seducee seemed worthy of each other, and the audience, who are always excellent judges of these things, with one voice proclaimed the lady to be Mrs. Coates.

“ Meanwhile Attamont, who had been absent some time, contrived in the interval to get a

cold, and on his re-appearance his whine was exalted to all the dignity of a hoarse croak. Thus the play went on, amidst croaking, squeaking, barking, to say nothing of the indescribable sounds which issued from the amateur, till Lothario died, when a struggle arose between him and the audience whether they should most applaud or he most deserve applause. He writhed, they clapped ; he stiffened his distorted limbs, they grew enthusiastic ; he fell flat and died, and 'unextinguished laughter' shook the house ! After the death of the great attraction, nothing could be heard with common attention ; Calista stabbed herself, Sciotto bled to death, and Horatio squeaked his dirge over them all in vain. The audience groaned, and the curtain fell.

"In a short time the amateur re-appeared in a military jacket and cap, and repeated his 'Hobbies.' The metre of this poem seemed as various as Southey's 'Thalaba,' though not so musical ; it was as short, but not so pointed, as an epigram, and concluded with professing the reciter's 'hobby' to be 'doing good.'

"We have no doubt that this gentleman con-

descends to play the fool for the above laudable purpose, but perhaps he may have heard somewhere that the manner of doing a thing is sometimes as much considered as the thing done; it would be perhaps worth his while to try if he cannot do a little good without making goodness ridiculous. We are aware that this advice tends to deprive the town of much amusement, but it might have the chance of rendering the good-dispositioned amateur more amusing to himself. We cannot hope, however, that such a person as Mr. Coates will take our advice, but perhaps his new coadjutors, the whining, croaking Attamont, and the barking Sciotto, may find it worth their attention."

It will thus be seen that Mr. Coates was a lamentable proof of the truth of the saying, "How little we know ourselves!" With an independent fortune, a good education, and the manners of a gentleman, he might have been a brilliant ornament of society—nay, further, he might have followed his acting mania, and shone as a star in private theatricals, then at an extraordinary low ebb; but to appear on the public boards before a paying audience

was an act of folly that, after the novelty had worn off, became a positive annoyance to the play-going world.

I was introduced to Romeo Coates one night behind the scenes of Covent Garden Theatre, when, for a benefit, he recited, "Bucks, have at ye all!" On retiring with him into the green-room, I found him gentlemanlike and agreeable, though very egotistical, as he would dwell upon his Haymarket performances, urging me strongly to attend the next, which, as usual, was for a charitable purpose. For many years I lost sight of him, and only met him once more, within a short period of his death. We happened by chance to sit next to one another in the stalls of the Olympic Theatre, and, recognizing him at once, I introduced myself. We talked of old times, but I carefully avoided any mention of his amateur performances. Some weeks afterwards, I read of his death in the newspapers. In private life Mr. Coates was much esteemed, and in later years made up for the eccentricity of his earlier ones by a life of usefulness and benevolence. Whenever Coates acted the house was filled with personal

friends of Romeo Coates, or by orders issued by the manager to secure a good house, very few of the public caring to pay for so ridiculous an entertainment. And now a few words respecting free passes to the theatre.

It is well known to all play-goers that a considerable quantity of what is termed "paper" is nightly issued at most of the London theatres. The system has been carried on for years, and has proved highly detrimental to managers. Reynolds, the dramatist, tells us that, during the run of his really popular, half popular, really damned, and half-damned pieces, he had, on an average, written or procured one hundred and fifty double orders to each; he consequently calculating that, on the aggregate, above fifteen thousand people had, through his privilege alone, entered the theatre gratis.

The question, however, is a very difficult one to solve; on the one hand, if the house is not filled with orders, everything looks dull and forlorn, the actors lack that applause which is so delightful to the ear, and which acts as an incentive to their exertions; on the other, if this kind of accommodation paper, like the

paper kite in commercial concerns, or like that issued by impecunious spendthrifts, circulates freely, there is a considerable loss to the manager. Looking at both sides of the medal, I am inclined to think that all managers should agree to look a few half-filled houses boldly in the face rather than, by patching up appearances, continue to play nightly to overflowing audiences, and to an empty treasury.

CHAPTER XI.

SADLER'S WELLS THEATRE—THE “DOG-STARS”—CARLO AND THE “CARAVAN”—REAL WATER—SHERIDAN'S WITTY REMARKS—THE DOG OF MONTARGIS—“GELERT” AT THE ROYAL CIRCUS—A MENAGERIE AND HORSEMANSHIP AT DRURY LANE—GEORGE RIGNOLD AND HIS STEED IN RICHARD III.—AN OURANG-OUTANG AT MUNICH.

Knights, squires, and *steeds* must enter on the stage.

POPE.

The cat will mew,
And *dog* will have his day.

SHAKESPEARE.

IT has often happened, when managers have found that bipeds fail to draw, they have had recourse to quadrupeds, and for some time the *dog-stars*, as they were facetiously called, were in the ascendency. The first notice I find of them was at Sadler's Wells Theatre. A subordinate, but enterprising actor, of the name

of Costello, collected at the great fairs of Leipsic and Frankfort a complete company of canine performers, and, arriving with them in England, Wroughton, at that time manager of Sadler's Wells, engaged him and his wonderful troupe. They were fourteen in all, and, unlike those dancing-dogs still occasionally seen in the streets, they acted conjointly, with a truth that appeared almost the effect of reason. The *star* of the company was named Moustache, and the piece produced, as a vehicle for their first appearance, was called "The Deserter."

As is usual whenever distinguished foreigners arrive in England the world, more especially the fashionable world, flock to see them, and the rage was to visit Sadler's Wells to see Moustache and his coadjutors. I pass over the performance till the last scene, merely remarking that the characters of Simpkin, Skirmish, and Louisa were admirably well performed, and their costumes were thoroughly characteristic. Moustache, the deserter, appeared in a military uniform, with smart musket, cheering and inspiring his fellow-soldiers to follow him up scaling-ladders to storm the fort. The

roars, barking, and confusion which resulted from this attack may be better imagined than described.

At the moment when the gallant assailants seemed secure of victory the retreat was sounded, and Moustache and his adherents were seen receding from the repulse, rushing down the ladders, and then staggering on the stage in a state of panic and dismay.

How were these grand military manœuvres so well carried out? probably asks the reader. I will enlighten him. The performers, having had no food since breakfast, and knowing that a fine, hot supper, unseen by the audience, was placed for them at the top of the fort, they naturally speeded towards it, filled with hope and exultation. Just as they were about to commence operations Costello and his assistants commenced theirs, and by the smacking of whips, and other threats, drove the terrified combatants back in disgrace.

This reminds me of a remark made by old Astley to Mr. Harris of Covent Garden. "Why do my performers act so much better than yours? Because mine know, if they don't

work like horses, I give them *no corn* ; whereas, whether your performers do or do not walk over the course they have their *prog* just the same."

Early in the present century Reynolds produced a piece at Drury Lane, entitled "The Caravan," which, as far as results went, far surpassed any of his former dramatic works.

The introduction of real water on the stage had been previously confined to Sadler's Wells ; but when it was about to flow on the classic boards of Old Drury, and a dog was to be found to jump into it from a high rock, for the purpose of saving a child, there were, during the production of the piece, various opinions expressed as to its success, even provided that the element and the "Member of the Humane Society" could be brought into action. Proposals were soon set on foot, and the above objects were, after a time, found. The water was brought in from the Thames, and the dog was hired from the proprietor of an A-la-mode beef-shop.

There was no difficulty with the water, but, during the first and second rehearsals, "Carlo" (for such was the name of the hero) sulked, and

evidently would not attend to what the actors term the “business” of the scene. After several ineffectual attempts to make him jump, a plan was proposed and carried out, which produced the desired effect. The platform on which he stood was enclosed by two projecting scenes ; his attention being thus removed from the distractions of stage-lights he immediately made the desired leap, and repeated it at least a dozen times, as much to his own as to the satisfaction of those engaged in the piece.

On the first representation of “*The Caravan*,” after his performance of this extraordinary feat, and after his triumphant exit, the effect far exceeded the author’s most sanguine expectations. So great was the success that Reynolds cleared three hundred and fifty pounds simply by a dog jumping into a small tank of water.

After witnessing the above performance Sheridan suddenly entered the green-room, on purpose, as it was imagined, to congratulate the author on his success.

“Where is he?” was the first question.
“Where is my guardian angel?”

“Mr. Reynolds has just retired,” answered the prompter.

“Pooh!” replied Sheridan. “I mean the dog, actor, author, and preserver of Drury Lane.”

The plot of “The Caravan” is cleverly constructed, and a constant interest is excited by one or two of the characters, more especially the canine star, and the incidents their situations produce. The regent of Spain, a usurper, is in love with the Marchioness Calatrava, and sends her husband, a prisoner in a caravan, to the governor of Barcelona. He gives orders that he shall have no food on the journey, designing thus to kill him; but the driver of the caravan, “Blabbo,” contrives to share the allowance of himself and his dog with the marquis, and thus preserves him in the first instance. He afterwards releases him from the prison in the governor’s castle, together with the marchioness and her child, a little boy.

A creature of the regent having got them again into his power, the marquis is sent on board a ship, and the marchioness and her son are brought into the governor’s palace, where

she is told she must return the regent's passion, or her husband will be executed, and her child thrown from the top of a rock, in her presence, into the water. She refuses. The child is thrown from the rock. Blabbo passes at the moment, shows the child to the dog, who plunges into the water and saves its life. Pirates, who are introduced into the first scene of the piece, rescue the marquis.

The cast, a powerful one, was as follows :

The Marquis Calatrava	Mr. H. Johnston.
Governor of Barcelona	Mr. Dowton.
Blabbo	Mr. Bannister.
Captain of the Pirates	Mr. Dignum.
The Marchioness Calatrava . .	Mrs. H. Johnston.
Rosa	Miss De Camp.

Carlo, who was really the principal character, was not mentioned in the bills.

After a time "The Dog of Montargis" was produced with great effect at one of the then called minor theatres, and at the Surrey, then known as the Royal Circus. A most successful melodrama, entitled "Llewellyn, or the Faithful Gelert," attracted large audiences; both of the above pieces owing their success as much to

the admirable performance of the quadrupeds as to that of the talented biped actors who formed the company.

In 1831 the boards of Drury Lane Theatre were desecrated by converting this temple of the legitimate drama into a menagerie. Monsieur Martin, from the Cirque Olympique, Paris, and his wild beasts appeared on the 16th October, and, surprising and curious as was the general effect of the exhibition, it was certainly not suitable to a stage on which the best works of Shakespeare, Sheridan, Goldsmith, Colman, Reynolds, Morton, and other distinguished dramatists had been represented. In one scene, Monsieur Martin was seen apparently lying asleep on a lioness, and was afterwards defended by that animal and a very fine male lion against a party of armed soldiers. Two boa-constrictors wound themselves round his children, whom he rescued from the frightful folds of the serpents. There was a procession in which two elephants figured, and a llama was hunted by a small tiger. In the latter part of the drama, the Frenchman was thrown into the den of a lioness, reputed to be the fiercest

of her kind, and, after a long, arduous fight, he conquered the animal. The last scene exhibited the triumphal entry of Hyder Ali into Mysore with his elephants. What the Lord Chamberlain of that day and the committee of the proprietors of Drury Lane were about we know not, but a more disgraceful exhibition never took place on the boards of a legitimate theatre.

Another change came over Drury Lane, and great was the indignation of the public when they found that the scene of Kemble's, Siddons', Kean's triumphs was to be desecrated by a foreign troop of equestrians. Yet such was the case. The critic's pit of old was converted into a ring, the boards were turned into sawdust, some dozen vaulters were throwing summersaults over a tame animal, the whole being enlivened by the "La, la!" of a French clown. Every lover of the legitimate drama felt the degradation that had been heaped upon this national edifice. The only wonder was that the marble statues of Shakespeare and Kean, in the entrance hall, did not follow the example of Il Comandante in "Don Giovanni," and move

from their pedestals, disgusted with the abasement which the English stage had undergone.

In these remarks it is far from my intention to censure Franconi or his clever troupe of bipeds and quadrupeds, but there is a place for everything. Had they gone to Astley's amphitheatre, their appearance would have been hailed with delight, for nothing could exceed the riding of Mademoiselle Caroline, the training of her steed, or the graceful evolutions of Palmyre Anato and Coralie Ducos. "La Lutte des Voyageurs" was a most spirited performance; indeed, all the equestrians and *she*questrians (as the late Charles Mathews, the elder, used to call them) evinced great powers in their respective departments, while the activity of the three "grotesques," MM. Auriol, Leclair, and Annöt fils, was very conspicuous. Still we missed the old, though perhaps senseless, conventional jokes of the clown in the circle, which had been familiar to us since the days of our childhood; his asking the "groom-in-waiting" to bring him "some soup for Mr. Savory," *id est*, "a hoop for Mr. Avery;" his exclamation to the young lady in pink and white gauze, "Here's

your white handkerchief, washed with black soap and dried on a gridiron!" his remarks to the youth equipped as Zephyr, "Here's the garters, long and strong; two makes a pair;" his reproof to the "genius of the ring" when he applied the whip, "Don't tickle me, or you'll make me laugh!" his declaration that his man John was the best servant in the establishment, "as he always gets up last, so as not to disturb the rest of the household!" his inquiry "as to what he shall come for to go, for to fetch, for to bring, for to come, for to go, for to carry?" and his practical joke in taking precedence of his master in the following dialogue—Master: (with dignity) "I never go after a fool!" Clown: (retiring and following him) "I always do!"

A good story taken from the newspapers occurs to me. Although Richard the Third exclaims, "A horse, a horse! my kingdom for a horse!" it may happen that upon certain occasions the presence of this equine quadruped may be dispensed with, as the following instance will prove. One night, during last season, the Queen's Theatre at Manchester was crowded to witness the performance of Shake-

speare's historical play of “Henry V.” by Mr. George Rignold and his company. Everything went well until the last act, when an accident occurred which for a moment startled the audience, and excited expressions of alarm and sympathy of the most emphatic character. Henry the Fifth had won his battles with the French, in spite of overwhelming odds, and on his return to London was received with cheers by his loyal subjects. The stage was filled with citizens, and when the King presented himself, seated upon his proud and noble white charger, the spectators joined heartily in the shouts of satisfaction, and the scene was one of enthusiastic success. While the cheering was at its height, the curtain descended; but so gratified were the audience with the magnificent pageant that they vociferously insisted upon once more beholding the victorious monarch and his gallant steed.

When, in answer to the call, the curtain again was drawn up, the horse and its regal rider were seen emerging from an arch, and, as they advanced, the house rang with plaudits. Suddenly the animal stumbled, and there was a

cry and an uneasy movement amongst the audience. There was the fear that either Mr. Rignold or his horse would be hurt, and the excitement of the moment was not relieved when it was found that the animal was unable to recover itself. The fear became more intense as it was perceived that a trap in the centre of the stage had given way, and that the horse's off hind-leg was in the hole.

During all this, the dismounted monarch evinced consummate coolness. The audience were becoming alarmed, but he calmed them by an assurance that there was no danger. Kneeling behind the animal, he looked down the hole which the now wholly open trap had formed, and, after communicating with those below, called for a rope. Before, however, anything could be done, the animal made a violent effort to recover itself, and, as a consequence, it began gradually to slip into the trap, and finally, overbalancing itself, disappeared altogether. The drop-scene was again lowered, and for a few moments the audience remained in a state of anxious suspense. Presently Mr. Rignold re-appeared, and announced that neither he

nor his horse was injured. The audience then gave an enthusiastic cheer, and shortly afterwards the performance was proceeded with, and brought to a most successful termination.

While on the subject of animals, I am reminded of an event that occurred at a theatre in Philadelphia. The manager, anxious to revive the waning fortunes of his house, hit upon the device of introducing a live lion into a play. A large and ferocious beast was borrowed from a menagerie. His appearance in a wild scene, apparently loose, though he was really confined by ropes around his legs, was a tremendous hit, but he spoiled the rest of the play by roaring in his cage at the back of the stage. He crouched and killed the venturesome pet dog of the leading actress, and finally scared all the performers out of the theatre by breaking a bar of his cage, in his effort to get out.

Foreign managers are equally alive to what may be termed "artful dodges" to secure novelties; for I find that an accomplished ourang-outang was lately exhibited at Munich, which played the violin magnificently, and was particularly deft in executing "The Carnival of

Venice." Its owner pocketed large profits at first; but one evening a doubting spectator slyly gave the wonderful monkey a sharp cut with a penknife. The creature apparently did not feel the cut, so the visitor gave a vigorous pull at his tail, which suddenly came off, and brought with it part of the monkey's skin, displaying underneath a man, the father of the exhibitor of the animal prodigy, whose disguise had been so complete as to defy detection for more than a week.

CHAPTER XII.

EARL OF SHAFTESBURY, WHO FLOURISHED EARLY IN THE LAST CENTURY—HIS REMARKS ON THE DRAMA—HIS CENSURE ON CRITICS WHO DECRY THEATRICAL PERFORMANCES—HIS ILLIBERAL COMMENTS ON “HAMLET” AND “OTHELLO”—BOILEAU’S LINES ON THOSE BIGOTS WHO DENOUNCE THE FRENCH STAGE, EQUALLY APPLICABLE TO OUR OWN COUNTRYMEN.

I maintain, against the enemies of the stage, that patterns of piety, decently represented, may second the precepts.

DRYDEN.

A CELEBRATED writer, Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, who flourished early in the last century, merits the description given at the opening of his work. It runs as follows:—

“ You, my Lord, who are the noblest actor, and of the noblest part assign’d to any Mortal on this earthly Stage, when you are acting for

Liberty and Mankind; does not the publick Presence, that of your Friends, and the Well-wishers to your Cause, add something to your Thought and Genius? or is it that Sublime of Reason, and that Power of Eloquence, which you discover in publick no more than what you are equally Master of in private; and can command at any time, alone, or with indifferent company, or in any easy or cool hour? This indeed were more Godlike; but ordinary Humanity, I think, reaches not so high."

So writes an "Enthusiastic Friend," and I quote his letter, because in many respects I endorse the eulogium, more especially as the noble Earl in his work declares that "The Stage may be allow'd to instruct, as well as the pulpit. The way of Wit and Humour may be serviceable, as well as that of Gravity and Seriousness, and the way of plain reason, as well as that of the best sermon. The main matter is to keep these provinces distinct, and settle their just Boundarys. 'Tis the good Critick's Task to amend our common Stage; nor ought Dramatic Performances to be decry'd or censured by those Criticks. The Practice and Art is

honest in itself. Our Foundations are well laid. And in the main our English Stage is capable of the highest improvement, as well from the present genius of our Nation, as from the rich Oar (query ore) of our early Poets in this kind."

Lord Shaftesbury has a thorough knowledge as regards the qualifications for a dramatic writer.

"'Tis no wonder that the primitive Poets were esteemed such Sages in their Times, since it appears they were such well-practised Dialogists, and accustomed to this improving method before ever Philosophy had adopted it. Their Mimes, or characterized Discourses, were as much relish'd as their most regular poems, and were the reason, perhaps, that so many of these latter were found in such perfection. For Poetry itself was defin'd as Imitation chiefly of Men and Manners, and was that in an exalted and noble degree, which in a low one we call Mimickry. 'Tis in this that the great mimographer (Homer), the Father and Prince of Poets, excels so highly; his characters being wrought to a likeness beyond what any suc-

ceeding Masters were ever able to describe. Nor are his Works, which are full of Action, any other than an artful series or chain of Dialogues, which turn upon one remarkable Catastrophy or Event. He describes no Qualities or Virtues, censures no Manners, makes no Encomiums, nor gives Characters himself, but brings his Actors still in view. 'Tis they who show themselves. 'Tis they who speak in such a manner as distinguishes them in all things from others, and makes them ever like themselves. Their different compositions and alloys so justly made and equally carry'd on, through every particle of the Action, give more Instruction than all the Comments or Glosses in the World. The Poet, instead of giving himself those dictatorial and masterly airs of Wisdom, makes hardly any figure at all, and is scarce discoverable in his Poem. This is being truly a Master. He paints so as to need no Inscription over his Figures to tell us what they are, or what he intends by them. A few words let fall on any slight occasion from any of the Partys he introduces are sufficient to denote their Manners and distinct Character. From a finger or a toe he can re-

present to our Thoughts the Frame and Fashion of a whole Body. He wants no other help of Art to personate his Heroes, and make them living. There was no more left for Tragedy to do after him than to erect a stage, and draw his Dialogues and Characters into Scenes, turning in the same manner upon one principal Action or Event, with that regard to Place and Time which was suitable to a real Spectacle. Comedy itself was adjudg'd to this great Master, it being deriv'd from Mere Parodys or Mock Humours, of which he had given the Specimen in a conceal'd sort of Raillery intermix'd with the Sublime. A dangerous stroke of Art, and which requir'd a masterly Hand, like that of the Philosopher Hero, whose character was represented in the Dialogue Writings above mention'd."

Shaftesbury proceeds to say: "Besides some laudable Attempts which have been made with tolerable Success of late years towards a just manner of writing, both in the heroick and familiar style, we have older proofs of a right Disposition in our People towards the moral and instructive Way. Our old dramatic Poet

(Shakespeare) may witness for our good Ear and manly Relish. Notwithstanding his natural Rudeness, his unpolished Style, his antiquated Phrase and Wit, his want of Method and Coherence, and in his Deficiency in almost all the Graces and Ornaments of this kind of Writings, yet by the justness of his Moral, the aptness of many of his Descriptions, and the plain and natural Turn of several of his Characters, he pleases his Audience, and often gains their Ear without a single Bribe from Luxury or Vice. That piece of his ('Hamlet') which appears to have most affected English Hearts, and has, perhaps, been oftenest acted of any which have come upon our Stage, is almost one continu'd Moral, a Series of deep Reflections drawn from one Mouth upon the Subject of one single Accident and Calamity naturally fitted to move Horror and Compassion. It may be properly said of this Play, if I mistake not, that it has only One Character or principal Part. It contains no Adoration or Flattery of the Sex, no ranting at the Gods, no blustering Heroism, nor anything of that curious mixture of the Fierce and Tender which makes the hinge of modern

Tragedy, and nicely varies it between the Points of Love and Honour.”

I cannot endorse the opening sentiment respecting Shakespeare, although I cordially do the latter. Then, again, I denounce the following criticism on “Othello,” which is most illiberal, and thoroughly unworthy of a writer who professes to be just and fair in his reflections on Men and Manners. Talking of “Othello,” he writes:—

“ He hit our taste in giving us a Moorish Hero, full fraught with Prodigy, a wondrous Story-teller; but for the attentive Part the Poet chose to give it to womankind. What passionate Reader of Travels, or Student in the prodigious Sciences, can refuse to pity that fair Lady who fell in love with the miraculous Moor, especially considering with what subtle grace such a Lover could relate the most monstrous Adventures, and satisfy the wondering Appetites with the most wondrous Tales, wherein (says the Hero Traveller)

‘Of Antars vast and Desarts idle
It was my hint to speak,
And of the Cannibals that each other eat,

The Anthropophage, and men whose heads
Do grow beneath their Shoulders. These to hear
Would Desdemona seriously incline.'

"Seriously 'twas a woful Tale! unfit, one would think, to win a tender Fair one. It's true the Poet sufficiently condemns her fancy, and makes her (poor Lady!) pay dearly for it in the end. But why, amongst his Greek Names, he should have chosen one which denoted the Lady Superstitious, I can't imagine, unless, as Poets are sometimes Prophets too, he should, figuratively, under this dark Type, have represented to us: That, about a hundred Years after his Time, the Fair Sex of this Island should, by other monstrous Tales, be so seduced as to turn their Favour chiefly on the Persons of the Tale-tellers, and change their natural Inclination for fair, candid, and courteous Knights into a Passion for a mysterious Race of black Enchanters, such as of old were said to 'creep into Houses, and lead Captive silly Women.'"

Boïleau writes:—

"Chez nos dévots aieux le théâtre abhorré
Fut long-tems dans la France un plaisir ignoré,
Des pèlerins, dit-on, une troupe grossière
En public, à Paris, y monta la première ;

Et, sottement zélée en sa simplicité,
Joua les Saints, la Vierge et Dieu par piété :
Le savoir à le fin, dissipant l'ignorance,
Fit voir de ce projet la dévote imprudence,
On chassa ces docteurs préchant sans mission ;
On vit renaître Hector, Andromaque, Ilion."

And the above remarks apply with equal force to our own country, for in all ages, and even in our refined days, the stage has been denounced not only from the pulpit, but by those who describe themselves as belonging to serious families. Strange, then, must be the feelings of an unprejudiced person when, strolling through Westminster Abbey, he finds that nearly the whole of Poets' Corner is devoted to the memory of dramatic writers and stage players. He will naturally ask how it is that this denounced race, not long since described as vagrants and vagabonds, should be so honoured at their deaths by former deans and chapters of that venerable pile which contains the ashes of the great and the illustrious.

How truly has it been said that the players, though the great instruments of innocent mirth, national amusement, and moral instruction of all the subjects of this free country, have, by

an unaccountable fatality, been least protected and most persecuted. Even in the reigns of Elizabeth and James I., when, from the people's fondness for theatrical representations, there were no fewer than twenty playhouses open in the city of London and Westminster, not only the fanatics of those times, but some ascetic divines of the Established Church, published books against the players, in which they were represented as persons who practised a profession unlawful and profane, and contrary to the religion of the Gospel. The canons of the holy heads of the Holy Roman Catholic Church were ransacked and quoted against the poor players. When we examine the arguments adduced against these people, we find them either founded on misapplications of the original text, or entirely supported by ignorance, folly, and fanaticism. I will not take upon myself to assert that the players are more exemplary in their lives, or more remarkable for their piety, than their neighbours, yet, on inquiry, they will be found to have less disturbed the peace of society, and to have committed fewer crimes, than any other body of men. One honour, at

least, the player can boast which is entirely his own: the greater of this, and perhaps of any nation, belonged to their profession. I refer to William Shakespeare.

The players, too, have ever merited a large claim to royal favour. In the breaking out of the civil war, in the reign of Charles I., they were firm friends to the royal cause. Robinson, the actor, was killed at the siege of Basingstoke by Harrison, who refused him quarter, and shot him in the head, after laying down his arms. Mohun, who was a favourite actor in the days of Charles II., held a commission as a captain. After the Civil War was ended he served in Flanders, where he received pay as a major. The famous Charles Hart, who shared with his sovereign the caresses of the celebrated Nell Gwynn, was a lieutenant of horse in Prince Rupert's troop. The first actor of Othello, after the Restoration, was a cornet in the same troop, of which Leillsell was quarter-master. Allen was a major and quarter-master at Oxford, and I venture to assert that there is not on record an actor, with the exception of Swanston, a Presbyterian, who sided with

the parliament against the martyr Charles, who has not proved himself a staunch supporter of the government of his country.

I am here reminded of an amusing anecdote of George Colman, who, when called upon to serve in the militia, gave the following reasons for declining the honour. The document forwarded him ran as follows, "State your reasons for declining to serve." Upon which the wit wrote, "Old, lame, and a coward."

CHAPTER XIII.

INDIGNITY TO WHICH THE ENGLISH ROSCIUS, GARRICK, WAS EXPOSED—COMPLIMENT PAID BY THE HOUSE OF COMMONS TO A POPULAR ARTIST—VESTRIS, LE DIEU DE LA DANSE—A FRENCH “CALEMBOUR”—ADVENTURE WITH JONES AND ABBOTT OF THE THEATRE ROYAL, COVENT GARDEN.

J'y vois le grand acteur, qui toujours se varie,
 Imité d'un héros l'élan impétueux ;
 Nous peint la politique et ses plis tortueux ;
 D'un tendre sentiment développe les charmes ;
 Là frémît de colère ; ici verse des larmes ;
 Par un jeu séduisant échappe à ses censeurs,
 Et gouverne à son gré l'âme des spectateurs.

• • • • •
 Consultez votre cœur ; c'est là qu'il faut chercher,
 Le secret de nous plaire et l'art de nous toucher.

• • • • •
 Que le geste facile et sans art déployé,
 Avec le sens des vers soit toujours marié,
 Songez à réprimer son emphase indiscrète ;
 Qu'il soit des passions l'éloquent interprète,
 Développe à nos yeux leur flux et leur reflux,
 Et devienne pour l'âme un organe de plus.

Des passages divers décidez les nuances ;
Punetriez les repos, observez les silences.

DORAT.

HERE let me refer to an indignity that the English Roscius was exposed to by a member of the House of Commons, who, on seeing him sitting in the gallery of that august assembly, immediately moved to clear the house. Upon this Garrick wrote the following lines, which appeared in Davies' life of that celebrated actor :

“ Squire B——n * rose with deep intent,
And notified to parliament
That I, it was a shame and sin,
When others were shut out, got in ;
Assisting in his wise oration,
I gloried in my situation ;
I own my features might betray
Peculiar joy I felt that day.
I glory when my mind is feasted
With dainties it has seldom tasted ;
When reason chooses Fox's tongue
To be more rapid, clear, and strong ;

* This gentleman's political creed is that all government whatever is to be supported ; a passive obedience doctrine very pleasing to every minister and every prince. With Mr. B——n, Nero has as strong a title to allegiance as Titus Vespasian.

When from his classic urn Burke pours
A copious stream through banks of flowers ;
When Barre stern, with accents deep,
Calls on Lord North, and murders sleep ;
And, if his lordship rise to speak,
Then wit and argument awake ;
When Rigby speaks, and all can hear him,
Who can withstand *ridendo verum* ?
When Thurlow's words attention bind
The spells of a superior mind.
Now, whether I were Whig or Tory,
This was a time for me to glory ;
My glory farther still extends,
For most of them I call my friends ;
But if, Squire B——n, you were hurt
To see me, as you thought, so pert,
You might have punished my transgression,
And damp'd the ardour of expression.
A brute there is whose will confounds,
And frights all others with strange sounds ;
Had you, your matchless pow'r displaying,
Like him, Squire B——n, set a-braying,
I should have lost all exultation,
Nor gloried in my situation.”

As a set-off to the above, I must quote a compliment paid to the profession, which will scarcely be believed in our day, namely, that the House of Commons adjourned upon one occasion to enable the members to attend the benefit of Vestris at Her Majesty's Theatre.

Such, however, was the case, as will be seen by the following extract of a letter from Horace Walpole to the Reverend Mr. Mason, dated February 19th, 1781: “They have put off the second reading of Burke’s bill because Wednesday was a fast day, and Thursday Vestris’ benefit. Religion has had its day, and the French dancer his; and then the National Senate will be at liberty to think whether it will save three-halfpence ought of eighteen millions that are to be raised in hopes of protracting the war, till at last we want eighteen millions more.”

The above-mentioned Vestris was known as “Le Dieu de la Danse.” In England he carried all before him, but at Paris he had a young and powerful rival in Duport, which gave rise to the following *calembour*: “Vestris à fait naufrage en approchant du Port.” His son was also a popular dancer, of whom it was said:

“Immortal chief! who on one leg could do
What erst no mortal could achieve on two.”

He filled the coffers of the Opera House by his wonderful Terpsichorean feats.

As an additional proof of how little actors were appreciated in society some fifty-five years

ago, I could give many instances, and among them the following:—During the time I was on the personal staff of the late Duke of Wellington at Cambray, France being then occupied by the allied armies, I was constantly in the habit of going over to Valenciennes to witness the amateur performances that were got up in that town. My friend Frederick Yates, father of the present Edmond of *World-wide* fame, generally accompanied me, and we were constant guests at the mess of the 21st Fusiliers. Among other officers of that distinguished corps, we got intimately acquainted with Lieutenant Cole, who was one of the principal actors. As Young Norval, he proved himself to be much more of an actor than an amateur. After leaving the service, he took to the stage, under the assumed name of Calcraft, which *nom du théâtre* he adopted when acting at Rochester.

It so happened that Mr. Calcraft, afterwards Paymaster of the Forces, was canvassing that borough, and, being a popular name in those parts, Cole took advantage of it. After a successful engagement in London, Cole (or, as I must now call him, Calcraft) became lessee of

the Theatre Royal, Dublin, and subsequently the friend, adviser, and biographer of Charles Kean. During the period Calcraft was on the stage, he paid a visit to Windsor, where I was quartered with my regiment, the Royal Horse Guards (Blues). Hearing of his arrival at the Castle Hotel, and anxious to pay him every attention in my power, I sounded my brother-officers as to whether he would be an acceptable guest at the mess-table, stating that I had known him when serving with the 21st Fusiliers. I soon found that the prejudice against him, not personally, but as an actor, was so strong that I abandoned my design of inviting him to dinner, and gave him luncheon in my own room.

Another instance occurred in 1817. The 18th day of November was fixed upon for the funeral of the idolised hope of a free nation, the Princess Charlotte, the beloved wife of Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg. It was a day of voluntary humiliation and sorrowful meditation. Upon the above melancholy occasion, it fell to my duty, as a captain in the Royal Horse Guards (Blues), to escort the body from

Cumberland Lodge to St. George's Chapel, Windsor. The imposing ceremony took place at night.

The day before the funeral, I was taking a solitary ride towards Clewer, when all of a sudden I overtook two gentlemen walking on the footpath, which was divided by a small hedge from the road. Upon nearer inspection, I ascertained them to be Messrs. Richard Jones and Abbott of Covent Garden, to whom I had been introduced in the green-room of that theatre. Great was my surprise to find that they evidently avoided me, and, taking advantage of a tree, they remained behind it, in the hope that I should pass on. Anxious, however, to show them some civility, I rode my horse up the bank and confronted them. After the usual salutation, being desirous of having a few words of conversation with them upon what was then with me an all-absorbing subject, the stage, I gave my horse to a country lad who happened to be passing, and proposed accompanying them in their stroll.

As in those days, on the occasion of a royal death, all theatres in the metropolis were

closed from the day of the demise until the evening after the funeral, Messrs. Jones and Abbott told me they had taken advantage of this to come down to Windsor, in the hope of getting a glimpse of the funeral ceremony.

"I am to escort the body," I said, "from Cumberland Lodge to the Castle, and, if I can in any way manage to smuggle you in, I will do so with pleasure."

"A thousand thanks," responded both, looking at one another in a manner that showed me there was (to use a slang expression) "something up." Abbott had both his hands behind him, and his companion kept one in the breast-pocket of his great-coat. As we walked along, whenever I turned to the one or the other, I evidently saw there was a mystery, and that both were trying to hide something. At first I thought they were illustrating a well-known scene in Colman's comedy of "The Heir at Law," and that Abbott had "the Honourable Mr. Dowlass' luggage tied up in a silk pocket-handkerchief," while his companion had a change of attire in his side-pockets. The mystery was presently solved by a most unexpected occurrence. The

lad who was leading my high spirited second charger, "Abelard," had "gee-ho-ed" and "gee-up-ed" him in such a manner that, unused as he was to such language, he had broken away, and was scampering up the bank.

"Catch him," I exclaimed.

"All right," responded the Thespians, who, in the excitement of the moment, and from a most laudable anxiety to serve me, rushed forward to seize the rein of the startled steed. In so doing a white cloth fell from one, and a paper parcel from the other. These remained unheeded until the animal was secured by Abbott, who exclaimed, after the manner of Edmond Kean,

"A horse! a horse! my kingdom for a horse!"

A trooper of the Blues, happening fortunately to be passing by, came to our assistance, and led the horse quietly back to the road. After expressing my thanks to my theatrical friends, I stooped to "pick up the bits," and, to their utter confusion, I found the cloth contained some pork chops, some rashers of bacon, and a Bologna sausage, the paper parcel muffins and crumpets.

“We fancied,” said Jones, “that we might be put to it for provisions, so, having secured beds at Clewer, we went on a foraging excursion to Windsor.”

“Quite right,” I responded, feeling that the discovery had placed me in “a tarnation awkward fix,” for being then quartered, as I have already said, at the cavalry barracks, it would appear the height of inhospitality not to invite them to the mess. The reader has been acquainted with my reason for not so doing.

“And when do you return to London?” I asked.

“On Thursday,” replied Abbott. “I have to perform in the new dramatic piece, ‘Father and his Child.’ Jones has a holiday, for Braham and Stevens are to sing in the ‘Castle of Andalusia.’”

“Will you, then, dine with me on Thursday at the ‘Piazza’?” said I. “It would give me the greatest pleasure to ask you to the barracks, but we are in an awful state of confusion, having to entertain some of the Life Guards coming here on duty.”

This was what is termed a *white lie*, but, for

the life of me, I could never discover the different hues of mendacity. White or black both are hateful, and equally to be condemned.

“Thursday will suit us admirably well,” said both.

“Agreed,” I replied. “Five o’clock punctually at the ‘Piazza,’ and a grilled bone after the play.”

We then parted, and I did not again meet my friends until the mournful night when the funeral was to take place. Upon approaching the Castle, where I had told Jones and Abbott to look out for me, I found them waiting in front of Knight’s library, and, calling to them, requested they would keep as near my horse as possible. At that moment I heard my name called in a lady’s voice, and, looking up, beheld Lady Hill and her daughter, anxiously trying to approach me.

“We have tickets,” said Lady Hill, “but they say it is now too late to admit them.”

“Corporal Hatton,” said I, “open out a little, and let these two ladies pass between you and the next man. And perhaps you will take care of Lady and Miss Hill,” I said, addressing

Abbott and Jones, who immediately came forward, offered their arms, and soon approached the Castle gates.

“No one can pass,” exclaimed the porter on duty, “except those taking part in the procession.”

“Lady Hill has tickets,” I replied.

“And these two gentlemen,” continued the Cerberus, “have they tickets?”

Of course I could not be guilty of a *black* lie, when a lucky circumstance occurred.

“I belong to the establishment at Carlton House,” said a man in royal livery.

“Pass in,” responded the porter.

A brilliant idea flashed across my mind.

“Both these gentlemen,” I said, “belong to the Court. They are Her Majesty’s servants.”

“I suppose, Colonel” (I was only a captain), “it’s all right. Pass in.”

The woodcutter’s son, in the fairy-tale of the “Forty Thieves” was not more surprised when, at the magic word “Sesame,” he found the doors of the robbers’ cave fly open, than were my friends at their unexpected good fortune,

when the Castle flung open its doors to receive them.

Frederick Yates was a first-rate actor, a clever manager, and a most agreeable member of society. My first acquaintance with him was at Cambray, in 1816, during the occupation of France by the allied armies. He was at that time attached to the Commissariat Department, and was a welcome guest at the table of Wellington, and at the mess of the regiments quartered there, and at Valenciennes. Upon one occasion I drove him to the latter town to witness the amateur theatricals. The play was "Douglas," in which Cole acted Young Norval.

After the performance, we supped with the *corps dramatique* in the mess-room of the 88th, Connaught Rangers. After a time the fun became fast and furious, and when Joe Kelly, as he was always called (a brother of Michael Kelly, the composer and wine-merchant, of whom it was said that he composed the wine and imported the music), and Fairfield of the 88th had sung several songs, Yates was called upon to give his imitations of the London

actors. This he did marvellously well, including Dowton, Munden, Fawcett, Knight, Incledon, Liston, Emery, and Braham. Elated with success, he wound up with the speech from "Douglas," in which Young Norval tells Lady Randolph his early history, "a low-born man, of parentage obscure." So perfect was the imitation of the hero of the evening that cheer followed cheer. In a second Cole's "dial plate," as Sam Slick calls it, changed from "set fair" to "stormy weather," and, rising suddenly from his chair, he left the room, followed by Fairfield, to whom he had made a significant sign to accompany him. In those days I need scarcely remind my readers that duelling was carried on to a frightful extent, when, for a slight or supposed injury, a man was paraded at twelve paces "on the daisies" the following morning. For some little time there was an anxious silence, which was broken by Joe Kelly, one of the best-tempered men alive, saying he would, on Yates' part, see what could be done to arrange the affair amicably. As both Cole and Yates were brave as lions, everyone feared that a hostile meeting must take place; happily, how-

ever, the conference between the two seconds brought about an amicable reconciliation. Cole returned to the room, Yates met him half-way, an exchange of hands (not shots) took place, and peace was restored.

On becoming manager of the Adelphi, he performed in almost every first-class drama that was produced at that theatre, and generally made a "starring" tour in the provinces.

On the 21st day of June, 1842, when rehearsing a new part on the stage of the Dublin Theatre, he ruptured a blood-vessel, which led to his decease, at the early age of forty-five.

Yates married Miss Brunton, one of the most exemplary women in private life, and one of the most charming actresses of the day. He left an only son, whose literary reputation has procured him a *World-wide* fame.

CHAPTER XIV.

JOHN PHILIP KEMBLE—MRS. SIDDONS—STEPHEN KEMBLE—
ADDRESS WRITTEN BY HIMSELF ON HIS APPEARING AS
FALSTAFF—CHARLES YOUNG—CHARLES KEMBLE—FULSOME
LINES ON THE RECOVERY OF HIS VOICE.

The choice and master-spirits of the age.

SHAKESPEARE.

IN early life I constantly saw the majestic John Kemble, the stately Siddons, the classical Charles Young, the graceful Charles Kemble, the “Child of Nature,” Mrs. Jordan, the plaintive O’Neil, the gifted Incledon, the clever Jack Bannister, the youthful prodigy, Henry West Betty, and Irish Johnstone. John Kemble’s style of acting was eminently regulated by art; his performances were premeditated, his manner was pompous, and little was left to natural impulse. His best parts were

Coriolanus, Cato, Hamlet, King John, Jaques, Penruddock, and Mr. Haller in "The Stranger." As Constance, Volumonda, Lady Macbeth, and Isabella in "The Fatal Marriage," Mrs. Siddons was unapproachable. This lady owed much of her success to her personal beauty and dignity; though perhaps somewhat classical and cold, she was ever grand, noble, and dignified. As the tragic muse, she has been immortalized by Sir Joshua Reynolds; a more perfect portrait never issued from an artist's studio.

No tragic actress ever had such absolute dominion over her audience as Mrs. Siddons, nor were her audiences common and indiscriminating, for, in addition to a splendid display of the principal rank and fashion of the period, Burke, Wyndham, and Sir Joshua Reynolds were frequently seen in the orchestra, all testifying an equal admiration of her commanding talents.

Old Mr. Harris, of Covent Garden, used to say that he had more cause to praise and admire her than even Sheridan himself, for she brought as full houses to Covent Garden as to Drury Lane, though the former paid her no

salary. The fact was that on Mrs. Siddons' nights Mr. Harris (being sure of an overflow from Drury Lane) only put up his weakest bills, reserving the strongest for his off nights, thus probably, at the end of the week, the average amount of the receipts was in his favour.

About ten years after the appearance of Mrs. Siddons, Mrs. Crawford (previously Mrs. Barry) hearing at a dinner-party some of the guests lauding the new *Melpomene*, and being vexed and disconcerted at the eulogiums passed upon her, said,

“ You know nothing of the matter. The Garrick school,” she cried, “ was all rapidity and passion, while the Kemble school was so full of paw and pause that at first the performers, thinking their new competitors had either lost their cues or forgotten their parts, used frequently to prompt them.”

Mrs. Crawford was so great a favourite, both on and off the stage, that the majority did not pursue the argument, believing that, to whatever school Mrs. Siddons belonged, she was the finest proficient that ever existed.

The versatility of this truly great tragic actress will be shown in the following anecdote:

Miles Peter Andrews, after the ninth night of Reynolds' comedy, "Better Late than Never," gave a supper, and invited to his house not only Kemble, Dodd, Palmer, Baddely, and other actors who played in it, but King, Parsons and many more distinguished performers. The Duke of Leeds, Lord Dudley, Lord Palmerston, and other eminent personages were present. During the evening, after Parsons had told a rich comic story, and Dodd had sung a pathetic ballad, Kemble, in his turn, was requested to favour the company with a song. "Gentlemen," he exclaimed, rising, "I will most cheerfully give you the song of the gods and goddesses repairing to the hunting of the hare; but, if I produce any humorous effect in it (as I trust I shall), you will please to ascribe the whole merit to the hints I have received from one of the best comic singers of the day. I beg leave to state that I allude to Mrs. Siddons." That John Kemble spoke as he thought cannot be doubted; for it must be recollected that, in her early days, Mrs. Siddons frequently

sung as Rosalind and as Nell in “The Devil to Pay,” and in other comic characters.

Sarah Siddons, the eldest daughter of Mr. R. Kemble, was born in Lancashire. She first became a candidate for public favour, under her father’s management, as a singer, but soon abandoned that line, and attempted tragedy. Early in life, she conceived a passion for Mr. Siddons, which not being approved of by her parents, she quitted the stage, and engaged herself as lady’s-maid in the family of Mrs. Greathead, at Guy’s Cliff, near Warwick, where she remained about a year, and quitted her situation to be united to Mr. Siddons; after which they performed at Liverpool, Birmingham, and many other provincial theatres.

During Mr. Garrick’s time Mrs. Siddons appeared at Drury Lane, but was considered as only a second-rate actress; and being, unfortunately, placed in an afterpiece which did not succeed, the author (who was editor of a newspaper) took every opportunity of injuring her reputation, on which account she quitted the London boards, and accepted an engagement at Bath, where she rapidly improved, and be-

came the heroine of that stage in 1780. Having the good fortune to be patronized by the Duchess of Devonshire, she procured her another engagement at Drury Lane, at ten pounds per week. On her re-appearance the theatre was crowded every evening, and her fame fully established by her performance of Isabella in “The Fatal Marriage.” The manager, far from proving ungrateful, generously gave Mrs. Siddons an increase of salary, with an extra benefit, on which night the receipts of the house were enormous. Two counsellors, Pigot and Fielding, were so delighted with her acting that they collected a subscription among the gentlemen of the bar, amounting to one hundred guineas, and presented them to her, accompanied with a polite letter, as a token of their esteem and approbation.

In the summer of 1784 she performed at Dublin, and the manager made his boast of the enormous sum of one thousand pounds, which he had secured to her for so many nights. During the following winter Mrs. Siddons performed for the first time “by command of their Majesties,” and the succeeding season

took a second trip to Ireland, and also visited Edinburgh; at both of which places she not only received great salaries, but a number of very considerable presents.

Their Majesties paid her particular attention. Her talent in reciting dramatic works had been so highly spoken of that she was frequently invited to Buckingham House, where she and her brothers, John, Philip, and Charles, read plays for the amusement of the royal family.

Mrs. Siddons was majestic in person, had a striking countenance, and a splendid voice; and the judgment with which she modulated the latter was not to be excelled, nor was it ever equalled by any other actress. She possessed that art of speaking for which Mrs. Yates was so justly admired, combined with the impassioned style of Mrs. Crawford when in her meridian. In private life she ranked high as a truly amiable and exemplary wife and mother.

This celebrated actress closed her professional career at Covent Garden Theatre in the part of Lady Macbeth for her own benefit. So early as three o'clock in the afternoon the

people began to assemble about the pit and gallery doors, and at half-past four the pressure was so very great that those who had attended early, in the hope of getting a good situation, were driven from the doors by the rush of those who were under the arches. Several persons who had attempted to get in became overpowered by the heat, and in endeavouring to retrace their steps created great confusion. So formidable was the crowd that not more than twenty ladies obtained places in the pit, and the house was crammed in every part.

When Mrs. Siddons made her appearance, she was received with the loudest acclamations ; she appeared much affected, and shed tears which seemed much to relieve her, and she went through her part with her usual excellence. At the end of the sleeping scene, the plaudits continued from the time of her going off till she again appeared to speak her address (which was nearly a quarter of an hour). She delivered the speech in a very impressive manner, and at its conclusion Mr. Kemble came and led her off by the hand. She then, as well as himself, appeared much affected, for the

audience, not satisfied with the usual method of showing their approbation, stood upon the seats and cheered her, waving their hats for several minutes. It having appeared to be the wish of the majority of the audience that the play should conclude with her scene, the curtain was dropped; but Mr. Kemble came forward and announced that, if it was the wish of the house, the play should proceed; the audience was divided, and the farce of “The Spoiled Child” commenced, amidst loud acclamations from one side and disappointment from the other. This continued during the whole of the first act, there being a constant cry from pit and gallery of “The fifth act! the fifth act!” It was then found in vain to proceed any further, as the house was all noise and confusion, and the voices on the stage were totally inaudible; it was therefore deemed advisable to drop the curtain, and the audience, some short time after, quietly dispersed.

The following is a copy of the address spoken by Mrs. Siddons:—

“Who has not felt how growing use endears
The fond remembrance of our former years?

Who has not sighed when doom'd to leave at last
The hopes of youth, the habits of the past,
The thousand ties and interests that impart
A second nature to the human heart,
And wreathing round it close, like tendrils climb,
Blooming in age and sanctified by time ?
Yes ! at this moment crowd upon my mind
Scenes of bright days for ever left behind,
Bewildering visions of enraptured youth,
When hope and fancy wore the hues of truth,
And long forgotten years that almost seem
The faded traces of a morning dream !
Sweet are those mournful thoughts, for they renew
The pleasing sense of all I owe to you,
For each inspiring smile and soothing tear,
For those full honours of my long career,
That cheer'd my earliest hopes and chased my latest fear !
And though, for me, those tears shall flow no more,
And the warm sunshine of your smile is o'er,
Though the bright beams are fading fast away
That shone unclouded through my summer day,
Yet grateful Memory shall reflect their light
O'er the dim shadows of the coming night,
And lend to later life a softer tone,
A moonlight tint, a lustre of her own.
Judges and friends, to whom the tragic strain
Of nature's feeling never spoke in vain,
Perhaps your hearts, when years have glided by,
And past emotions wake a fleeting sigh,
May think on her whose lips have pour'd so long
The charmed sorrows of your Shakespeare's song ;
On her who, parting to return no more,
Is now the mourner she but *seem'd* before,

Herself subdued, resigns the melting spell,
And breathes with swelling heart her long, her last farewell."

Mrs. Siddons first appeared at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, in 1775, under an engagement made with Mr. Siddons, at Cheltenham, that summer, for Mr. Garrick; her salary was £6 per week, and that of Mr. Siddons 40s.

Her first appearance was as Portia in "The Merchant of Venice," a character not best suited to her powers; and afterwards she had a more unfortunate attempt in Mrs. Cowley's comedy of "The Runaway," soon after which her admirers had the mortification to see her descend to personate the walking Venus in the revived "Pageant of the Jubilee." She returned to the Bath Theatre in 1776, and returned a few years afterwards to re-illumine the London theatre with a splendour of talent which continued with undiminished lustre to her farewell night.

I once saw Stephen Kemble as Falstaff, and was delighted with his performance. Being very young at the time, I was scarcely a competent judge, and older critics thought little of his performance. This gentleman was well-known in the northern parts of the kingdom as

a manager and actor, and had been in possession of a respectable situation on the boards of Covent Garden and the Haymarket Theatres. He first appeared at Drury Lane on the 7th of October, 1802, in the above character, in the first part of “King Henry the Fourth.” The following address, written by himself for the occasion, will show that he was, at least, in point of magnitude and obesity, well calculated to represent the part :

“A Falstaff here to-night, by nature made,
Lends to your favourite bard *his pond’rous aid* ;
No man in buckram he, no stuffing gear,
No feather-bed, nor e’en a pillow-bier !
But all good honest flesh and blood and bone,
And weighing more or less some *thirty* stone.
Upon the northern coast by chance we caught him,
And hither in a *broad-wheel’d waggon* brought him,
For in a *chaise* the varlet ne’er could enter,
And no *mail coach* on such a fare would venture.
Blest with unwieldiness, at least, his *size*
Will favour find in ev’ry critic’s eyes ;
And, should his humour and his mimic art
Bear due proportion to his *outward part*,
As once ’twas said of Macklin in ‘The Jew,’
This is the very *Falstaff* *Shakespeare drew*,
To you, with diffidence, he bids me say,
Should you approve, you may command his stay,
To lie and swagger here another day ;

If not, to better men he'll leave his sack,
And go as ballast in a collier back."

The above was delivered by Mr. Bannister with uncommon effect, and produced reiterated bursts of merriment.

The critics of the day admit that Stephen Kemble was certainly successful in many scenes, and, in the soliloquy on his ragged regiment, he deserved and received much applause, but that he was far from being superior to any of his competitors in the character. "He is," it was said, "indeed very fat, but he is at the same time too active; his voice is powerful, but it wants richness and modulation; and, above all, he is defective in the luxuriance of humour with which Shakespeare has embellished this unparalleled character. Mr. Stephen Kemble may pass for a tolerable representative of Falstaff, in the present state of theatrical exhibition, but he enjoys no solid grounds of pre-eminence over Cooke and Palmer in the character."

I had the good fortune to be on terms of intimate friendship with Charles Young, an

actor who proved himself a most worthy follower of the Kemble school. His features were handsome, his voice of a good quality, and whether he appeared as Hamlet, Iago, Brutus, or Cassius in the highest walks of tragedy, or as The Stranger, Rolla, Duran, Rienzi, or what may be termed the melodramatic walk, he was equally great. As Sir Pertinax McSycophant, he was unapproachable in his day, though Phelps in more recent times must share the honour with him. In semi-serious parts, such as Joseph Surface, Falkland, and Mr. Oakley he was second to none. In private life, no man was ever more respected, not only for his personal accomplishments, for he sang with exquisite taste and expression, but for the urbanity of his manner and kindness of his disposition. In Charles Young the scholar, the gentleman, and the actor were combined.

Charles Kemble was equally good in comedy as in tragedy. His Falconbridge, Cassio, Benedick, Charles Surface were faultless. A few years before his death, I had the pleasure of dining with him at his house in Old Burlington

Street. In proposing his health, I quoted the line from Shakespeare,

“Thou last of all the Romans, fare thee well!”

which allusion seemed to touch him deeply. In returning thanks, so greatly was he affected that for a moment words could find no utterance. Recovering himself and brushing away a tear from his eyes, he thanked me cordially, saying that he never in his whole career felt more gratified or flattered than he did on the present occasion.

In private life Charles Kemble was highly esteemed; his quiet, dignified, gentlemanlike manners, his social qualities, endeared him to all classes, and he was ever the welcome guest at the festive board of the choice spirits of his day. With ladies, too, he was an especial favourite, and was ever the object of flattery, adulation, and hero-worship. Among other compliments paid him were the following verses, written on his re-appearance on the stage, after having temporarily lost his voice. Nothing can be more fulsome than the allusions to Echo,

Venus, Cupid, Narcissus, and Erato ; but let the
verses speak for themselves :—

“ As, mourning, Echo mov’d the glades among,
And listen’d, sad, to Philomela’s song,
The love-lorn nymph in silence sigh’d alone,
And wept the mute departure of her own !
Venus with pity view’d the fading Maid,
And gliding where a sleeping youth was laid,
With gentlest force she sank upon his breast,
And, while she sooth’d his waking sense to rest,
His graceful eloquence the goddess steals,
Then swift returns where sighing Echo kneels.
Enraptur’d Cupids ’neath her trophy burn,
They draw the treasure from its silver urn ;
With accents new the wond’ring valleys rung,
And tip with liquid fire her sadly silent tongue !
Narcissus now she seeks, within the grove,
To woo his pity, or to win his love ;
Harmonious feeling swells each captive strain ;
Entrancing Music pleads her years of pain !
While the warm æther trills with tender wounds,
And sweet Narcissus pants beneath the sounds,
Erato strikes with dread th’ astonish’d pair,
And from her lips the pilfer’d accents tear.
Now the soft Muse illumines her lurid eyes,
Her lab’ring heart no longer heaves with sighs ;
Bewitching smiles her very mouth adorn,
And gild the myrtle by the goddess worn ;
She hastes to Kemble, whose subduing air,
Sweet passion pleads before the British fair,
His fragrant lips imbibe the precious stream :

Again his eyes with eager feeling beam ;
Again his voice enchains th' enchanted ear ;
Again his form the boards of rhet'ric bear ;
Erato, joyous, crowns her fav'rite son
With Fame's bright chaplet, from the Graces won !"

CHAPTER XV.

EDMUND KEAN—DINNER AT GREENWICH—KEAN'S VERSATILE TALENT—MRS. GLOVER—A PHALANX OF ENGLISH ACTRESSES—JACK BANNISTER, HIS FAVOURITE “FAG”—CHARLES MATHEWS—RAIKE'S OPINION OF HIM—TYRONE POWER—IRISH JOHNSTONE—DOWTON—MUNDEN—W. FARREN—ELLISTON—RICHARD JONES—ABBOTT—HARLEY—EMERY—FAWCETT—KEELEY—COMPTON—BARTLEY—BLANCHARD.

When a good actor doth his part present
 In every act he our attention draws;
 That at the last he may find just applause.

DENHAM.

THE first time I ever saw Edmund Kean off the stage was in his dressing-room at Drury Lane Theatre; he had been acting Richard the Third. I had dined with George Lamb, and we had witnessed the performance, and, at the conclusion of the play, my host of the evening proposed a visit to the tragedian.

Upon entering his room we found the crooked-back tyrant prostrate on his sofa. He had been travelling the whole of the previous night and during a great portion of the day, and had dropped in to a neighbouring tavern, "The Wrekin," with his friend Oxberry, to take an early dinner. Kean was surrounded by a host of persons, including the stage manager, treasurer, Douglas Kinnaird, Alderman Albion Cox, whose wife shortly afterwards attained an unenviable notoriety, and was the subject of a ballad of the Catnach school, sung about the streets, which described her amour with the great Edmund, in which the lady was referred to as

"A specimen of *Albion's* wife,
But not of *Albion's* daughters."

Brougham and Scarlet were retained for the defence, when, after a most disgraceful investigation, the jury found a verdict for the plaintiff—damages £2,000.

It was a curious sight to witness the dressing-room of the eminent tragedian. The apartment—a moderate-sized one—was strewed about with the different articles of dress worn

by Richard. Here was his velvet cloak, there his jewelled head-dress, his *bâton*, sword, buff-leather boots, black curly wig, burnt cork, rouge, and a powder puff. Upon a small table appeared wine and spirit bottles, glasses, letters, play-bills, and posters.

The next time I met Kean was at a dinner at Lord Hertford's, in Seymour Place. It was at the very zenith of his theatrical glory, when he was nightly electrifying the playgoing world with his transcendent genius. The late Duke of Beaufort, Earl of Glengall, Sir George Warrender, Honourable Douglas Kinnaird, Honourable George Lamb, Honourable Craven Berkeley, John Calcraft, M.P., Colonel Cook, commonly called Kangaroo Cook, Messrs. Francis Russell and Crawford were present, and, to make it agreeable to the guest of the evening, Oxberry was invited to accompany his friend and boon companion, Kean. During dinner every attention was paid to the idol of the day, numerous glasses of wine were drunk with him, compliments flowed fast, and the party anticipated a glorious evening after the cloth had been removed; but they were doomed to disap-

pointment. While the attendants were occupied with their duties amidst a crowd of servants, and the necessary bustle of such a movement, Edmund Kean turned quietly round to Oxberry, pointed to the door, gave him a look which his brother actor understood, and in a second both had vanished.

The whole affair took less time to carry out than I have occupied in describing it. Indeed, so sudden was it that it was not observable by the noble host; no one, except the butler, caught the guest's last words, as, after he quitted the dining-room, he cloaked himself in the hall.

“Six months ago not one of these great lords would have noticed the poor stroller; now their adulation is unbounded. Pshaw! I prefer a quiet glass with a friend like you, to all their champagne, effervescent, frothy as themselves!”

What a contrast to the above was a dinner given in 1827 by the late Earl Fitzhardinge to Edmund Kean, at the “The Old Ship,” Greenwich. A small party, devoted to theatricals, and warm admirers of the tragedian, were

to assemble at Berkeley House, Spring Gardens, to proceed, in his lordship's drag, barouche, and phaeton, to the town celebrated for its park, its fair, its hospital, its pensioners, white-bait, and shrimps.

Four o'clock arrived; for we were to devote an hour before dinner to a stroll in the park, a row on the river, or a visit to Lord Fitzhardinge's yacht, the *Imogene*, when a note was brought to our host from Kean's secretary, Mr. Lee, saying that sudden indisposition would prevent Mr. Kean attending. As the dinner had been got up expressly for him I lost no time in getting into the phaeton, and driving off to the residence of the popular actor, where I found him and his worthy amanuensis.

With all the eloquence I could command, I pointed out the great disappointment that would be caused if the honoured guest was absent; told him that the party was small, composed of boon companions, and that he could retire at any moment. After a time I succeeded in getting him into the phaeton, and, with Mr. Lee on the back seat, returned to Berkeley House. Upon entering it I said,

“The day is very hot; a glass of brandy and water would be very refreshing. What say you?”

“Not for the world,” responded the tragedian.

A tray was brought in, and Kean did not require much pressing to imbibe a portion; how much I will not stop to inquire. The potion, however, seemed to invigorate him, and the guests having assembled we made a start. Remembering what had occurred at Lord Hertford’s, I thought it best not to lose sight of my friend; so he, his secretary, and myself proceeded to take our seats in the open barouche, and, with a pair of fast-trotting post-horses, were soon bowling away at the rate of ten miles an hour. In consequence of the delay we only reached Greenwich in time to walk through the splendid picture-gallery, and at six o’clock sat down to dinner.

No sooner was the cloth removed than Kean, who had enjoyed his dinner and his wine thoroughly—the guests having been warned to leave him alone, and not in any way to lead him on to tell anecdotes—began to shine

forth on his own account. He described, in the most vivid terms, his early career; told us how he, in many a country theatre, where his acting had not been inferior to that on the boards of Old Drury, had been looked upon as a mere ranter. He then referred to the night when, to "a beggarly account of empty boxes," a rush of twenty to the gallery, and half a dozen in the pit, he had acted on the same night Shylock and Harlequin. He then told us that he had constantly acted Macbeth and Tom Tug in "The Waterman;" Sir Giles Overreach, and Paul in "Paul and Virginia," on the same evening, to equally empty houses.

Inspired by our applause he gave a part of the trial scene in "The Merchant of Venice," then the soliloquy from "Macbeth," then the celebrated ballad of "The Storm," which he had introduced in "The Waterman," then an outburst from "The Moor of Venice," then the anathema in which Sir Giles denounces his daughter, then a simple melody from "Paul and Virginia;" then, as Sylvester Daggerwood, an imitation of London actors and singers, interspersed with anecdotes of the

green-room, managers, and actors, told with a brilliancy and feeling that interested everyone present, winding up this truly dramatic treat by going through the evolutions of Harlequin.

The carriages had been ordered at ten o'clock, but it was past eleven before we broke up.

"I'll not act to-morrow," said the hero of the evening to his secretary. "Send to say I'm ill."

This was uttered as we crossed Westminster Bridge. At that moment the bell of St. Paul's tolled.

"The King is dead!" exclaimed my companion.

True it was; for William the Fourth had been summoned to the tomb of his ancestors.

As far as Kean was concerned, our consciences were at rest; for, had he not appeared on the evening after the dinner, we should have felt ourselves the guilty parties. Owing to the demise of the sovereign the theatres were closed for some days, by which time the effects of the Greenwich dinner had been

got over, and “Richard was himself again.”

I was present at Covent Garden Theatre, on the 25th of March, 1833, when Edmund Kean appeared for the last time on the metropolitan boards. His performance of Othello, as far as it proceeded, was generally correct, and, although it was marked by a want of that energy which used to characterise his personation of that character, the audience appeared disposed to think he was only husbanding his strength for those portions of the play which demand greater exertion. When, however, the trial came his powers were unequal to it. In that speech in the third act, which those who have heard him deliver it in happier times can never forget,

“O now for ever,
Farewell the tranquil mind,”

he completely broke down. It became evident that he was unable to conclude the speech, and he was led off the stage. The drop-scene fell, and Mr. Bartley came forward to request the indulgence of the audience, expressing a hope that Mr. Kean would be able to resume the

character after a short interval. At the end of a quarter of an hour Mr. Bartley returned, and announced that it was the opinion of Mr. Kean's medical attendant that he would be unable to appear again in the course of the evening; that Mr. Warde had been sent for, and had undertaken the part at a very short notice. The play then went on.

On the 25th of May Kean's funeral took place at Richmond, where he died, and was attended by a numerous cortége. The Reverend Mr. Campbell read the lesson of the day. Though the church was crowded to excess, the most perfect stillness pervaded it during every part of the ceremony, which was conducted with due solemnity. After the lesson, a requiem, consisting of the two psalms in Purcell's Chant in G minor, was sung. Handel's anthem, "When the ear heard him," and the chorus, "He delivered the poor that cried," were then sung, and the body, followed by the principal mourners, was conveyed to the tomb, where the last rites were solemnized. On the return of the mourners to the body of the church, Handel's beautiful composition, "His body is buried in

peace, but his name shall live for evermore," was sung; and the scene closed on the earthly career of this great actor.

I now turn to one of the best actresses of my day, Mrs. Glover, formerly Miss Betterton. This lady was born in Ireland, in the year 1779, and as her father, Mr. Betterton, of Covent Garden, was then the manager of the Newry Company, she had an early opportunity of acquiring a knowledge of the theatrical profession.

The reputation which she acquired at Bath, where she made her *début* at the age of fourteen, and performed the principal characters in tragedy and comedy, obtained for herself and her father a very advantageous engagement on the Covent Garden boards. Her first appearance on them took place on the 12th of October, 1797, in the character of Edwina, in Miss More's tragedy of "Percy." She experienced a very favourable reception, and, up to the period of her taking leave of the stage, maintained a distinguished rank in her profession. The Comic Muse appears, however, to have been more propitious to her exertions than Melpomene; and in many of the parts performed by Mrs. Abing-

don she displayed a spirit, care, and discrimination which placed her, at least, on an equality with her competitors for public favour in the line of genteel comedy. Her person, though rather inclined to *embonpoint*, possessed much symmetry, and was not destitute of elegance; her countenance and voice were pleasing, and her movements were happily “suited to the word.” In 1800 this lady was married to Mr. Glover, a gentleman of a highly respectable family at Birmingham. Mrs. Glover’s daughters inherited in some degree their mother’s histrionic talent.

Mrs. Davison, formerly Miss Duncan, was a most fascinating actress, few excelled her in sprightly, genteel comedy; Mrs. Orger, although a polished lady in private society, was not at home in highly refined characters; Mrs. Keely was excellent in everything she undertook, a more perfect *artiste* never existed. In tragedy Mrs. Bunn was dignified, yet cold, Mrs. Fawcett was thoroughly majestic, Mrs. Bartley (as Miss Smith) was an excellent disclaimer, Miss Jarman was pleasing and touch-

ing, Miss Helen Faucit was faultless, Miss Fanny Kemble proved herself a worthy scion of a worthy sire, Mrs. Charles Kean was equally brilliant in tragedy, domestic drama, and comedy.

I once saw Bannister, or Jack Bannister, as he was familiarly called, as Frederick, in the farce of "Of Age To-morrow." He was possessed of first-rate comic powers, face, figure, and voice excellent, but too much addicted to what in theatrical parlance is called "gag." I well remember being very much struck with an effusion of his, which I have no doubt he introduced upon many an occasion. In one of the scenes he assumes the character of a hair-dresser, and, apologising for not being punctual to his appointment, tells the old lady that in his hurry he unfortunately fell over the banister, to which she replies,

"Oh! those dreadful *banisters*! I wish there were no such things."

"In that case, madam," responded the actor, "I should not have the honour of waiting upon your ladyship."

Unfortunately, in our days, we have some actors who indulge in “claptrap,” “fat,” and “foolery;” who suffer their delineation of character to degenerate into vulgar grimace, offering up their judgment as a sacrifice to the upper gallery, and who prefer a gaping distortion of feature to the simple and unconstrained expression of their own countenances; still they have not descended to the lowest form of humour, that of making wretched puns on their own names. What would an audience of bygone times have thought of Abbot, the prince of walking gentlemen, had he remarked that he had fallen foul of an Abbot, to which the jocose listener would probably have responded, “Abbot! what an awful *sell!*”. The names, too, of Mrs. Davenport, Misses Foote, Love, Booth, and Martyr; Messrs. Suet, Taylor, Knight, Cooke, and Sloman would have furnished materials for the punsters. In our refined days, we doubt whether Toole, whose genuine humour would burst the belt of an anchorite, who, if there is any truth in the saying, “Laugh, and grow fat,” would convert an *anatomie vivante* into a Daniel Lambert, could

raise a laugh were he, in accounting for unexpected delay, to declare that he had tumbled over a box of tools.

“*Tools; what a bore!*” responds a would-be punster.

When the actor would follow suit and exclaim,

“It is true an *augur* may *bore* a hole, but I *augur* better things; for I know a *Toole* who, I trust, will not *bore* anyone.”

To return to Bannister, Sir George Rose’s epigram on the veteran when he had passed his seventieth year may not here be out of place:—

“With seventy years upon his back,
Still is my honest friend ‘Young Jack;’
Nor spirits checked, nor fancy slack,
But fresh as any daisy.
Though time has knocked his stumps about,
He cannot bowl his temper out,
And all the Bannister is stout,
Although the steps be crazy.”

Charles Mathews, the elder (whose mantle gracefully descended upon his son, the late ever green, lively, intelligent Charles), was a first-rate artist, and, for years, was unrivalled.

In addition to his dramatic powers he was an excellent singer. No actor ever threw more spirit into his delineation of characters than the inimitable Charles. His Goldfinch in “The Road to Ruin,” his Somno in “The Sleep-walker,” his Dick Cypher in “Hit or Miss,” with the celebrated coaching song, “With spirits gay I mount the box,” were faultless; indeed, that may be said of all he undertook.

I once passed a week in company with him and Theodore Hook, at a cottage near Windsor, which we rented for Ascot races. Upon the Cup-day Hook played a practical joke upon the comedian, which, for some little time, put his warm-hearted though somewhat irritable friend out of humour; his equanimity, however, was soon restored.

During breakfast, when the subject of ordering dinner was discussed, Mathews mentioned a joint, the only one he could not bear to see, much less to partake of. “Anything you like,” he exclaimed, “except a roast leg of mutton; that I abominate.”

After a long day upon the course we returned to our suburban villa very dusty, hot, and tired,

but with appetites of an ostrich. Upon sitting down to dinner, instead of finding some water zouche of flounders, some spitchcock eels, some veal cutlets, and a roast fowl, to the horror of Mathews and myself (for I had not been let into the secret) a tin-cover was raised, and a Brobdingnag leg of roast mutton appeared on the board.

“Sorry,” said Hook’s servant, who had been prompted what to say. “No flounders or eels to be had; Mr. Bannister sent his last joint of veal to the barracks, and the poultreer has disappointed us of the fowl.”

Hook began to fume with sham rage. I felt so annoyed that I proposed we should order a fly, and proceed to the “White Hart Hotel,” and dine there. Hook kept up the joke.

“By all means. Richard; order a fly, and remove that awful joint. ‘The time is out of joint,’ as Hamlet says.”

The order was obeyed, but, in a few minutes, the man returned with, as we thought, the same dish.

“Sorry, gentlemen,” said he. “There’s not a fly to be had.”

“Then all we can do,” said Theodore, “is to make the best of a bad job, so ‘good digestion wait on appetite.’”

The cover was removed, when, to the delight of Mathews and myself, instead of the huge leg of Leicester sheep, a dish with flounders floating in that liquid for which we are indebted to the Hollanders was seen; at the same moment a bill of fare was presented to Mathews containing the dishes agreed upon at breakfast. Good humour was then restored, the comedian merely saying,

“‘All’s well that ends well.’”

Hook added,

“I am glad it is ‘As you like it.’”

While I, *sotto voce*, remarked to the arch hoaxter,

“*Nimis uncis naribus indulges.* You drive the jest too far.”

Of Mathews, as an actor, it may be truly said—

“Sure such a various creature ne’er was known.”

Raikes in his journal tells an amusing story of Mathews. “Poor Mathews, the comedian,

is dead ; he is gone with his gibes and his jokes. He was a worthy man, an entertaining companion, an excellent mimic, but no ventriloquist, though by the modulation of his voice he attempted to appear so. The first time I ever saw Mathews was at my own house at dinner. Pope, the actor, had been drawing my poor wife's picture in crayons, for which he had a peculiar talent. He brought him to dine with me, and his imitations of Kemble, Munden, Bannister, Quick, &c., were inimitable. Pope, in the course of conversation, alluded to some old gentleman in the country, who was so madly attached to the society of Mathews that whenever he came to town he went straight to his house, and, if he did not find him at home, would trace him, and follow him wherever he might happen to be. This did not excite much attention, but about nine o'clock we all heard a tremendous rap at the street door, and my servant came in to say that a gentleman was in the hall who insisted on speaking with Mr. Mathews. The latter appeared very much disconcerted, made many apologies for intrusion, and said that he would get rid of him

instantly, as he doubtless must be the individual who so frequently annoyed him.

“ As soon as he had retired, we heard a very noisy dialogue in the hall between Mathews and his friend, who insisted on coming in and joining the party, while the other as urgently insisted on his retreat. At length the door opened, and in walked a most extraordinary figure, who sat down in Mathews’s place, filled himself a tumbler of claret, which he pronounced to be execrable, and began in the most impudent manner to claim acquaintance with all the party, and say the most ridiculous things to everyone. We were all for the moment thrown off our guard, but we soon detected our versatile companion, who had really not taken three minutes to tie up his nose with a string, put on a wig, and otherwise so metamorphose himself that it was almost impossible to recognize him. Of that party were also Tom Sheridan, C. Calvert, and H. Calvert, all of whom, alas! are now numbered with the dead.”

Mathews had one peculiar good quality, which may rather be called good sense, and

formed a contrast to many of his contemporaries. He was always amiable and obliging in company, and ready to enliven a party with his talents ; whereas I have seen many others who refuse every proposal to assist hilarity, lest it should be supposed they were asked merely for that purpose.

Of Tyrone Power, who was lost in the *President* on the voyage home from New York in the month of March, 1841, it may be said, as it was of Garrick, “ His death eclipsed the gaiety of nations, and impoverished the public stock of harmless pleasures.” In delineating real Irish life, more especially in the humbler walks, Power was unrivalled. The brogue was thoroughly Milesian, added to which he sang pleasingly, and was equally great in songs of pathos as of humour.

Anxious to make the voyage from New York an agreeable one, many young Englishmen made a point of taking a passage in the *President* that they might enjoy the society of Tyrone Power. Among them was a nephew of mine, Lord Fitzroy Lennox, a brother of the present Duke of Richmond. Lord Fitzroy had served

with the 42nd Light Infantry in Canada, and had recently been appointed to a troop in the 12th Lancers, a regiment in which his father once held a commission. Meeting Power at New York, and being of a genial nature himself, he at once decided upon coming home in the same ship with him. Alas ! the fatal news reached England that the ill-fated *President* had foundered at sea ; not even a vestige of her has ever been heard of.

I once saw "Irish Johnstone" as Sir Lucius O'Trigger, and a finer performance I never witnessed. His high-bred tone, his ease, his commanding air were peculiarly suited for such characters as the fire-eating baronet and the polished Major O'Flaherty ; no one has ever since done such justice to those parts. In farce Johnstone was rich, and his Irish songs, into which he threw much spirit, always created a *furore*. The 28th of June, 1820, witnessed the last performance but one in London of Irish Johnstone. He took a formal leave of the stage at Liverpool in the following August, but returned for one night at Drury Lane in May, 1822, when he volunteered his services as

Dennis Bulgruddery for the benefit of his distressed countrymen.

Dowton, as Sir Anthony Absolute, Oliver Surface, Dr. Cantwell, and the fat Knight Falstaff was unapproachable, and the same remark applies to Munden as Marall, Old Dornton, and Cockletop. William Farren, whose histrionic mantle has fallen on his son, was the best Lord Ogleby and Sir Peter Teazle that ever appeared on the boards during the present generation. Elliston's vivacity as Doricourt, his dignity as the Duke Aranza, his feeling as Walter in "The Children of the Wood" stamped him as a genuine good actor. As the three Singles, his performance gained him the highest rank in the dramatic world. Richard Jones was one of the best light comedians of the day. Abbott was a most useful actor, both in comedy and tragedy. Harley's acting was all life and energy. Emery as Pyke drew tears from his audience ; his Dandie Dinmont was perfectly true to nature. Fawcett's Job Thornberry and Captain Copp were splendid delineations. Kelly gave due effect to every character he undertook, and was as good in Shakespearian comedy

as he was in the broadest farce. Compton shared the honours with him as a Shakespearian actor. Bartley, in what may be termed a “Bless you, my children” part, was pathetic and effective.

Blanchard, known by his professional brethren as “Billy Blanchard,” struggled hard and successfully to attain a high rank in his profession. Having secured an apprenticeship at the Norwich Theatre, he first appeared before a London audience in October, 1800, as Bob Acres, but met with little success. According to the critics of the day, there was a degree of vulgarity and pertness in his manner which savoured rather of a provincial than a London performance. He afterwards played Crack in “The Turnpike Gate” with more effect, but still fell far short of Munden’s representation of that whimsical character. He, however, lived to be a useful and clever actor.

With every wish to do justice to those who delighted me in my early days, I fear that, in the above list, I have omitted the names of many distinguished actresses and actors. This to me is a deep source of regret, but, retentive as my memory is, some may have escaped it. I

could add to the above list a roll of illustrious names who are now, in their respective persons, proving that histrionic talent has not degenerated, but the task might appear invidious.

CHAPTER XVI.

LISTON—"MY FACE IS MY FORTUNE, SIR," SHE SAID—ILL-TIMED PLEASANTRIES—CURIOUS SCENE AT THE CHATELET PARISIAN THEATRE—MR. FLORENCE AND HIS COUNTRY-MAN—A FAUTEUIL LIT.

I believe they talked of me, for they laughed consumedly.
FARQUHAR.

Qui fait rire a toujours raison.

LA HARPE.

L ISTON, whose physiognomy realised the lines of Ariosto "natura lo fere e pol rappe la stampa," was a thorough gentleman, but disappointed many who unreasonably expected him to make himself funny at a dinner or evening party. In society he was quiet and reserved; upon the boards he was a favourite with the laughter-loving public. Even if he had not possessed comic powers to the greatest degree,

he might have still exclaimed, with the milk-maid in the ballad, “My face is my fortune.”

Liston was too fond of “gag,” too much addicted to practical jokes, and too prone to set his brother actors and actresses off into a burst of laughter, to be called a truly legitimate comedian; as a farceur, no one will dispute his talent. His Bob Acres in “The Rivals” was a lamentable failure; his Bailie Nicol Jarvie, though loudly extolled, was far inferior to that of Mackay; and his Dominie Sampson, though less objectionable, was certainly not what the “Great Unknown” meant it to be. His buffoonery was unworthy of an artist who held the position he did on the boards of a London theatre. His object, as I have already said, was to make his brother and sister performers laugh; highly successful was he in this questionable quality when acting with Miss Stephens, the present Dowager Countess of Essex. Her Lucy Bertram, which was a truthful, natural, and simple performance, was constantly marred by Liston, as the Dominie, introducing some ill-timed piece of foolery, caused this truly delightful syren to turn away from the audience,

while she in vain tried to keep in check her risible qualities.

In those days it was the custom for some actor at the end of the first play to give out the performance of the following evening. No sooner had he uttered the words, "Ladies and gentlemen, to-morrow evening this opera will be repeated," or "The tragedy of 'Hamlet' will be performed," than Liston would walk on from the opposite side, face the actor giving out the play, start back as if taken by surprise, and exclaim, "Prodigious!" "My conscience!" "York, you're wanted," or any other phrase which, during the evening, he had been repeating. This of course would cause a hearty laugh from the supposed victim of the jest, but it was not generally known that the whole affair was a premeditated one, got up in the green-room.

While on the subject of laughter I am reminded of a story which went the round of the Parisian press, and appeared in some English journals. For its veracity I cannot vouch, but it is amusing. It runs as follows:—

"A very curious scene occurred some even-

ings since at the Châtelet Theatre, where the ‘Pilules du Diable’ is still being played. A gentleman was so much amused by the fun of the piece that he laughed until his jaw came actually out of joint. The alarm of his wife at this sudden shock in his cachinnations may be easily imagined, but the medical officer attached to the building soon restored the laughter-maxillary equilibrium, and the couple returned to their seats, eager not to lose the end of the play. The gentleman was seen to smile later on, but with evident caution, and as though he feared that merely to open his mouth would place him in the same predicament as before.”

True or false, the anecdote is worth repeating. What a glorious puff it would be for a comic actor! The poet tells us “of laughter holding both its sides,” but I read for the first time of the stringent effect it produced on the jaw of a laughter-loving spectator.

I am here reminded of a story told of Mr. Florence, whose success with Mrs. Florence at the Gaiety Theatre must be extremely gratifying to their fellow-citizens abroad.

Mr. Florence is in private life one of the

most charming and genial of conversationalists, and tells the following story with the true dramatic *verve*. One of the incidents of a tour in Europe he was wont to relate with much gusto. Whilst visiting the Universal Exhibition of 1878, he met a fellow-countryman who had just returned from Switzerland. This gentleman accosted him, and inquired with interest respecting his future movements. On learning that he intended passing part of the summer at Aix-les-Bains, the new-comer advised him not to fail to engage what he termed a “fan-tailed litt” for the journey. The genial William was much puzzled to understand what manner of accommodation that could be. Finally he got his fellow-traveller to write down the name of the article in question, and discovered, to his amazement, that the so-called “fan-tailed litt” was no other than a fauteuil lit.

CHAPTER XVII.

SINGERS—"VOX ET PRETEREA NIHIL"—ANECDOTES OF BRAHAM AND PHILLIPS—T. COOKE—HIS IRISH AND AMERICAN STORIES—THE MUSIC TEACHER—THE BULL AND THE TROMBONE-PLAYER—ANECDOTES OF MADAME MALIBRAN—FOREIGN VOCALISTS.

When groping grief the heart doth wound,
 And doleful dumps the mind oppress,
 Then music, with her silver sound,
 With speedy help doth lend redress.

SHAKESPEARE.

Vox et preterea nihil.

Latin Proverb.

FEW singers, either male or female, have proved themselves good actors and actresses. Braham sang the music of the Serastiers, of

Rodolph, of Henry Bertram, of Don Carlos, of Young Meadows, of Prince Orlando, exquisitely well, but his representation of the different characters was very indifferent, and the same remark may be applied to Sinclair, T. Cooke, Pearman, Durnset, and others. Deference to the fair sex prevents my alluding to those whose acting never rose above mediocrity. Two glorious exceptions occur to me—Miss Maria Tree, afterwards Mrs. Bradshaw, and Madame Vestris, afterwards Mrs. Charles Mathews—both of whom would have ranked as first-rate actresses had they possessed no musical talent. I need not go further than to refer to Miss M. Tree (I give her fame name) as Viola and Clari, and to Madame Vestris as Phœbe in “Paul Pry,” and Lady Teazle. Another popular artist, Madame Malibran (to whom I shall further refer), the unfortunate daughter of Manuel Garcia, merits a niche in the Temple of Fame. As a singer and actress she was unrivalled. Nothing could exceed her delineation of the characters of Fidelio and the Maid of Artois. In private life her generosity was un-

bounded. Of her it may be truly said, "She had a tear for pity, and a hand open as day for melting charity."

Braham I occasionally met at dinner; he was full of anecdote, and told some excellent stories. As a vocalist he was, in his day, unrivalled, and though occasionally compelled to sing very indifferent music, to suit the depraved taste of the public, he was a thoroughly good musician, and, to a refined audience, this "Hebrew Melodist" could execute with taste, feeling, and judgment the finest compositions that Italy, Germany, or England could produce.

Braham was said to possess the finest tenor voice in Italy, and unquestionably its volume, sweetness, and pathos were most wonderful. His natural compass, though limited, had the most irresistible influence on the heart; his full, clear tone, coming directly from the breast, made the most heartfelt impression on the audience.

I recollect meeting him at dinner at Stephen Price's (then lessee of Drury Lane) in Pall Mall, and a very merry party it was, including

the Reverend Richard Barham, author of the “Ingoldsby Legends,” “Cupid Walpole,” as he was called, and others. After dinner, Braham did not approve of the *chasse café*, a liqueur glass of brandy.

“Rather potent!” he exclaimed, which rather “ryled” our host, the American manager. “I have some exquisite old brandy,” remarked Braham, “which I found in my father’s cellar.”

“Father’s cellar!—brandy!” responded Price, in a sententious voice. “That must have been the ‘Spirit of your sainted sire,’ the song which you wish inappropriately to introduce into every opera.”

Braham looked for the moment flurried, but soon recovered his composure, remarking,

“Yes, and, if you like it, I’ll give it you now in my best manner.”

This he did, and a more exquisite musical treat I never enjoyed.

Phillips was a very clever singer, and a great favourite with the public. A good story is told of him, when acting before a Dublin audience,

which gives another illustration of the fun and ready wit of “Paddy,” as nightly displayed by the occupants of the upper gallery. Phillips was acting the character of a naval officer, and appeared in the dress of that day—blue coat, ornamented with gold lace, cocked hat, or “sky-scraper,” according to Jack’s phraseology, sword, white duck trousers. The trousers, which were not of the whitest hue, attracted the attention of a “broth of a boy” seated in the front row of the gallery. “Mr. Pheelips,” he shouted, with the true Irish brogue, “bedad, I think you had better give your *ducks* a swim!” A shout of laughter followed this effusion; poor Phillips looked chapfallen, when his tormentor exclaimed, “Send ‘em to my washerwoman, old Bridget O’Shaughnessy; she’ll dip ‘em into the Liffey, dry ‘em on the gridiron, and then they’ll be fit nether garments for such a gentleman and foin singer as Mr. Pheelips!”

Tom Cooke (as he was familiarly called) was born in Dublin in 1781, and showed such a versatility of musical talent that at the age of

fifteen he was appointed leader of the band at the Cross Street Theatre, Dublin. He was distinguished through life for his agreeable manners, his ready wit, and kindly disposition. Some of his Irish anecdotes, told with the richest brogue, were calculated to set the whole company into roars of laughter. He composed many songs and glees, notably, among the latter, "Fill, me boys," which gained a prize at the Catch and Glee Club.

Upon one occasion, at a party of genial spirits, Tom Cooke told the following stories ; they lose, however, much of their point when given without the true Milesian brogue.

"Reynolds tells us," he said, "a very amusing story of a visit he paid to the Waterford Theatre, when 'Hamlet' was to be performed for the benefit of a Mr. Randall, a supposed *London star*.

"Upon entering the theatre, he found not only 'a beggarly account of empty boxes,' but a pit and gallery almost tenantless. Absenteeism was the order of the evening, and proved as great an evil to the player as it had

proved a curse to the country at large. When the hero of the night made his appearance, he suddenly receded with a start of horror, then again advanced, and, bursting with rage, exclaimed,

“‘Now, ladies and gentlemen, ought ye not to be ashamed of yourselves? And is this the way you support sterling talent?’

“‘By the powers!’ replied a spectator near the orchestra, ‘I only know the *whole pit here*, that is myself, my son Larry, and Donaghadoo, my mother’s son—paid to support you; and is this your gratitude, Jewel?’

“‘Feeth, and that’s just our way of thinking,’ cried a voice from the gallery; ‘so, go it, my *pippins*. Three cheers for the *present* company, and three groans for the *absent*!’

“These opinions opened Randall’s eyes, and he apologised, and thanked his few, but real benefactors.”

A curious circumstance occurred upon the above occasion, which is thus graphically told:

“The play then proceeded, and for some

time with only a few interruptions, when suddenly a new and most unexpected *actor* made his appearance: no less a personage than Father Neptune, who, owing to an uncommonly high spring-tide, followed us up even into a theatre. At first, however, he only invaded the passages, and lower parts beneath the stage; but soon filling them, and bending his irresistible course through the orchestra to the pit, it appeared probable that more personages than Ophelia would have 'too much of water.' At length the manager stepped forward, and, being somewhat confused, informed us that, rather than see an *existence* put to our *lives*, he begged we would *return* our money, and humbly *gave us leave to depart*.

"This address was received with thunders of applause, and the gallery people, seeing the water fill the theatre more and more, shouted out, as they departed,

"'Good luck to you, Randall, for you've at last got a *bumper*.'

"'Very good story, Tom, very well told,' exclaimed one of the company, 'and don't for-

get those about the musical teacher, and the bull and the trombone-player.'

"‘Faith, and I’ll do my best; but just pass the bowl,’" bursting out into a verse of his popular glee already referred to, "Fill, me boys."

"Among the replies to an advertisement," said he, "from a music committee for a candidate for an organist and music-teacher, was the following:

"‘Gentlemen,—I noticed your advertisement for an organist and music-teacher, either lady or gentleman. *Having been both* for several years, I beg to offer you my services.’

"‘Glorious! Tom. Here’s your good health. And now for the Yankee. I calculate, reckon, and guess you’ve not forgotten that,’ remarked his host.

"‘I’ll do my best,’ responded Cooke, ‘and give it in their own phraseology.’

"A trombone player at a provincial theatre missed his last train, and ‘put in the time’ by getting screechingly tight. Thoroughly primed up he started to walk the eight miles

that lay between him and his virtuous couch. On the road, feeling sleepy, he lurched into a field, and lay down under a hedge for a snooze. In the early morning a bull discovered old Trombone, and made at him, bellowing fiercely. Old Trombone shifted himself in his sleep, and remarked, ‘Tone too flat.’ Another bellow. ‘Tell yer you’re a tone too flat.’ Then the bull charged him, and boosted him over the hedge, and, when the musician picked himself up, he shook his fist at the bull, and ejaculated, ‘Well, you may be awfully strong, but you’re no musician.’”

England can boast of having given birth to many highly gifted vocalists; among the foremost may be mentioned the present Dowager Countess of Essex, who, as Miss Stevens, delighted all with her “wood-notes wild.” Miss M. Tree, afterwards Mrs. Bradshaw, whose touching notes in *Clari* went to the hearts of all. There were others, equally talented, who fully merited the applause showered upon them.

I now turn to a foreigner, poor Malibran,

with whom I was intimately acquainted, and whose early death I deeply deplored. She was the brightest luminary that ever shone on the English stage, and equally delightful in private life.

Malibran was happy in the affection of the late Duchess of St. Albans. This lady, from the amplitude of her portion—for, upon the death of Mr. Coutts, she, as his widow, succeeded to the share in the bank, and to the bulk of his prodigious accumulations,—as well as from the elevation of her position, had it at all times in her power to distinguish the daughters of Genius, of which she was herself, in her earlier years, a very pleasing example.

It is too often a consequence of prosperity that the favoured luminary shines coldly on her less fortunate stars. As a philosopher has still more severely remarked, “It is the ill consequence of prosperity never to look behind it;” but the Duchess of St. Albans was ever the benefactress of merit, and a kind hostess to those whose reputation and accomplishments made them worthy of her personal acquaintance.

The duchess gave a grand fête at Holly Lodge on the 11th July, 1835, remarkable for its taste and magnificence, and to it many of the operatic and theatrical profession were invited. The fête commenced with a concert in the open air, a novelty not exactly suited to the capricious nature of our climate, but the more to be prized whenever it can be accomplished. The principal vocalists were Grisi, Malibran, Rubini, Ivanhoff, and Lablache. Their brilliant performances were succeeded by an exhibition of Moore's dancers attired in a pastoral costume of a long departed age; a sumptuous *déjeuner dinatoire* followed, which took place under capacious marquees and tents. The concert, dance, and banquet were but the preludes to further festivities. The Duke of St. Albans, attired in the dress of his office, as Grand Falconer of England, presently led the way with a train of foresters and falconers to a grassy spot where the amusement of hawking commenced.

This sport was followed by a concert of national music, in which Malibran sang

the duet “Vive le Roi” with Braham. The entertainment concluded with a ball. Malibran, excited by the spirit of the scene, persuaded Lablache to waltz with her. Hers was indeed the poetry of motion. She then led off the first dance, a Russian mazurka.

Nothing could exceed the regard felt by Madame Malibran for the duchess, a feeling reciprocated on the occasion of the vocalist’s last benefit and appearance in London, which took place on the 15th July, 1836. The duchess, after the performance, visited her in her dressing-room and presented her with a bank note, a flacon, and, by way of souvenir, her embroidered handkerchief.

Much vivacity of character is very frequently united to great sensibility of temperament. The fortunes of Malibran were various, and, in many respects, tragic; but the natural bias of her disposition was at once playful and cheerful, consequently her manner frequently possessed a degree of joyousness that seemed exaggerated. Exercise on horseback was to her both a relief and a relaxation; equitation

was, moreover, an accomplishment in which she excelled.

In a rural excursion in the neighbourhood of London, while riding through a sequestered lane that had then escaped the general intrusion of brick and mortar, she began singing an aria to her companions, the late Mr. John Clayton, his wife, and myself, which we had greatly admired; it was the finale to "The Maid of Artois." The solitude was, however, speedily disposed of by the approach of two drovers with a herd of oxen. The men stopped, listened, and seemed lost in admiration. At the conclusion they burst forth in a loud cheer. Malibran felt the compliment, declaring that she was more pleased with the rural homage than when, after a triumphant aria, amidst a blaze of lights, and surrounded by a brilliant company, the entire audience sprang to their feet to give increased emphasis to their plaudits.

Malibran's powers as an improvisatore were great. At an evening party at a hospitable mansion in Oxfordshire, she sang an Italian

bravura with the greatest effect, and was warmly complimented by all around her, more especially by a young gentleman, a sort of "Verdant Green," who raved about the Land of Song, and gave as his opinion that English compositions were poor, wretched, and worthless.

The syren, with a sly look at her hostess, assented to this and said,

"As you admire foreign airs so much, I will sing a Spanish one that will, I think, please you, though, perhaps, not equal to the beautiful strains of Rossini or Verdi."

"Thank you," lisped the young man.

Malibran then sat down to the pianoforte and played a symphony, a very slow movement.

"Perfection!" continued the youth. "What a lovely and original melody!"

She then began her Spanish song, "Maria, trage un caldero," filling up the ballad with doggrel lines. At the conclusion the musical critic was in raptures; albeit those with more accurate ears discovered the trick that had been played upon him.

“What English ballad can compare with that?” he exultingly asked.

“Wait a moment,” said Malibran.

Then playing the same air quickly, she gave the words “Molly, put the kettle on,” much to the delight of the company and the discomfiture of the would-be connoisseur.

Another instance occurs to me. Upon one occasion, when enjoying a whitebait dinner at Greenwich, she improvised a song to the air of “Sul margine d’un rio,” bringing in the “Old Ship Hotel,” then kept by Derbyshire, its proprietor; whitebait, salmon cutlets, roast ducks, champagne cup, not omitting the young mud-larks picking up coppers thrown from the windows, and the usual delights of such entertainments.

In the life of Moscheles by his wife, translated from the original German by A. D. Coleridge, I find the following amusing anecdote of Malibran :—

“We had great fun the other day,” so writes the grand maestro in his diary of June 12th, 1836, when Malibran and De Beriot joined our

early dinner. The conversation turned upon Greccio's comic duet, which Malibran sang so frequently and charmingly with Lablache. Man and wife ridicule and abuse one another, caricaturing alternately each other's defects. When she came to the passage, 'La tua bocca è fatta apposta pel servizio della posta,' 'Just like my mouth,' said Malibran, 'as broad as you please, and I'll put this orange in to prove it.' One must have known De Beriot to appreciate his amazement and agony at seeing his wife open her mouth wide and discover two beautiful rows of teeth, behind which the orange disappears. Then she roared with laughter at her successful performance."

In the month of July, 1836, Malibran suffered from slight indisposition—so very slight that within four and twenty hours she took her accustomed exercise on horseback. Nevertheless, her mind was impressed with a feeling that some accident which might terminate fatally was about to happen to her. Under this idea, it was remarkable that she insisted upon riding out, though strongly advised against it by her

friends the Claytons and myself. During the commencement of the excursion, her entire conversation with Mr. Clayton turned upon the melancholy presentiment. On being rallied for this, she, with her usual gaiety, said, "I will have a gallop, and leave dull care behind." "Begone, dull care," she joyously sang, and, on setting off at a canter, applied her light riding-whip too severely upon the horse's neck. The animal, usually quiet, though rather fresh, and worried with the flies, got his mettle up, and suddenly increased his pace. A clatter of some horses behind him added to his excitement, and in a few seconds the rider had lost all control over her steed. Being a few paces in the rear, I called upon the Claytons to check their speed at once, which they accordingly did.

Bounding round the inner circle of the Regent's Park at an awful pace, Malibran, feeling herself lost, shouted for help, when a police-constable rushed forward, and seized the horse by the bridle. Unprepared for this sudden movement, the rider was precipitated with violence against the wooden palings, and fell

exhausted on the ground. Upon raising her, we found a contusion on her temple the size of an egg, and she was evidently suffering from some internal injury. A gentleman drove up in an open carriage, and, having offered his assistance, the sufferer was conveyed to her lodgings in Maddox Street.

On my way to dinner, I called there, and learnt, greatly to my astonishment, that Madame had gone to the theatre. Her extraordinary energy of character prevailed over the entreaties of her friends and medical adviser, and she insisted on representing two characters for which she had been announced that evening.

Subsequently she had to fulfil an engagement at Manchester. I was present at the evening concert of the 14th of September, 1836. I heard her take part in Beethoven's canon for four voices, from *Fidelio*, "What joy doth fill my breast!" I had listened with more pain than pleasure (for I knew how much she was then suffering) to the duet from Mercadante's opera of "Andronico," "Vanne re Alberghi in petto,"

sung by her and Madame Caradori. Scarcely had she finished the high shake made at its close, when, amid the tumult of the audience, she was led off exhausted, and was shortly declared to be too ill for further exertion.

On the following morning I called at the “Morley Arms,” where Madame and Monsieur De Beriot were staying, and gained ready access to both. Malibran had dressed herself, and was led by her husband to her sitting-room. She appeared in such a lamentable state of health that I urged her not to attend the performance, but without success. The late Sir George Smart, the conductor, called, and, accompanied by him and the borough-reeve, they proceeded to the church in the carriage of the latter. The result is known; pale as death, she appeared in the orchestra, fainted, and was conveyed back to the hotel, where on the 23rd of September she breathed her last, at the early age of eight and twenty. After a time, her remains were removed to Laaken, near Brussels, and deposited in a mausoleum by her husband, Monsieur De Beriot. Of her it may be truly said in the lines of Dryden:

“A fiery soul, which, working out its way,
Fretted the puny body to decay,
And o'er-informed the tenement of clay.”

I cannot conclude this chapter without referring to the enormous sums paid to Italian artists.

With what prodigal liberality do the public reward those foreign nightingales who emigrate to this isle; for, whilst men of literature and learning are in a great measure destitute of support, an Italian singer often receives a hundred pounds a night!

That those who contribute to our entertainment or amusement should be properly rewarded for their exertions is what every liberal mind must acknowledge to be right, but those rewards should be apportioned according to merit, and not settled by the standard of fashion or caprice. Would the favourite of fortune for a moment reflect upon the evils which result from munificence misapplied, those sums which are now lavishly wasted for the exertion of a voice would not only be devoted to our hard-working English players, but would add to the

funds of those excellent institutions which provide for their comfort when poverty, sickness, or age overtakes them.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FAREWELL NIGHTS—CHARLES YOUNG AND JOSEPH GRIMALDI—
PANTOMIMES—FAWCETT'S LAST APPEARANCE—HIS WITNESSES
TO CHARACTER.

Farewell ! there is a spell within the word.

DILMOT SLADDEN.

Superfluous lags the veteran on the stage.

SAMUEL JOHNSON.

THERE is always a painful feeling when witnessing for the last time the appearance of a favourite actor on the boards, one who for years and years has delighted his audiences with his dramatic talents. This feeling I have often experienced, and have felt, upon such occasions, as if I were bidding adieu for ever to

an old and valued friend. Among other farewell nights, I was present at Covent Garden when Young took his farewell benefit in “Hamlet,” the character in which he made his first appearance in London in June, 1807. After the performance he thus addressed the audience :—

“Ladies and gentlemen,—I have often been before you with a fluttering heart and a faltering tongue, but never till now with a sense of pain and a degree of weariness which almost still the beatings of the one, and impede the utterance of the other. I would fain have been spared this task, but it might have been construed into disrespect towards you; it is the usage, and to that I bow. I very proudly acknowledge the indulgence—the great and continued kindness—you have shown me for five and twenty years. You first received and encouraged my humble endeavours with a Kemble, a Siddons, a Cooke, and an O’Neill, and by their side I shared your applause. In this, the very last hour of my theatrical life, I still find myself cheered, supported, and upheld by your

presence and approbation. Although retirement from the stage, and from the excitement of an arduous profession, has been long my fervent wish, yet, believe me, there are feelings and associations connected with these walls and with the boards whereon I stand, where I have been so often cheered by your smiles and gratified by your applause, which make me despair of finding words sufficient to express my gratitude. I throw myself upon you, to measure the extent of gratitude, by the kind rule you have always observed when you have secured it.

“I surely say no more than the truth when I state that, whatever fame or fortune I may have obtained, or whatever worldly ambition I may have gratified, I owe them all to you. It has been asked of me why I retire from the stage while I am still in possession of all the qualifications I could ever pretend to unimpaired. I will give you my motives, although I do not know that you will receive them as reasons, but reason and feeling are not always cater-cousins. I feel the excitement and

toil of my profession weigh more heavily upon me than formerly ; and, if my qualifications are unimpaired, so I would have them remain. I know they were never worthy of the degree of approbation with which you honoured them ; but, such as they are, I am unwilling to continue before my patrons till I can offer them only tarnished metal.

“ Permit me, then, to hope that, on quitting this place, I am honourably dismissed into the bosom of private life, and that I shall carry with me the kindly wishes of all, to whom I now respectfully and gratefully say—Farewell !”

It is a curious fact that Mathews the elder, who played Polonius to Young’s Hamlet in 1807, did so again on the above occasion.

I was again present on Friday, the 27th of June, 1828, when Grimaldi took his leave of the stage at Drury Lane Theatre. The entertainments included an extravaganza, called “ Harlequin Hoax,” in which Miss Kelly played Columbine to Harley’s *Harley*-quin. The whole concluded with a selection from the most

approved comic pantomimes, in which the entire pantomimic strength of the metropolis assisted.

At the close of the performance Grimaldi thus addressed the audience:—

“Ladies and gentlemen,—I appear before you for the last time. I need not assure you of the sad regret with which I say it; but sickness and infirmity have come upon me, and I can no longer wear the ‘Motley.’ Four years ago I jumped my last jump, filched my last custard, and ate my last sausage. I cannot describe the pleasure I felt on once more assuming my cap and bells to-night—that dress in which I have so often been made happy in your applause—and as I stripped them off I fancied that they seemed to cleave to me. I am not so rich a man as I was, when I was basking in your favour formerly; for then I had always a fowl in one pocket, and sauce for it in the other. I thank you for the benevolence which has brought you here to assist your old and faithful servant in his premature decline. Eight and forty years have not yet

passed over my head, and I am sinking fast. I now stand worse on my legs than I used to do on my head. But I suppose I am paying the penalty of the course I pursued all my life. My desire and anxiety to merit your favour has excited me to more exertion than my constitution would bear, and, like vaulting ambition, I have overleaped myself.

“Ladies and gentlemen,—I must hasten to bid you farewell, but the pain I feel in doing so is assuaged by seeing before me a disproof of the old adage, that ‘favourites have no friends.’

“Ladies and gentlemen,—May you and yours ever enjoy the blessings of health, is the fervent prayer of Joseph Grimaldi. Farewell, farewell.”

Here the audience rose and cheered him loudly.

“Farewell!” he continued.

His son and Mr. Harley then advanced, and led him off the stage.

I remember an incident that occurred during Joe Grimaldi’s career which may not prove uninteresting. One evening, when witnessing his performance in the Christmas pantomime,

in company with the late Colonel Mackinnon, of the Coldstream Guards, and a few friends—all, alas, gone to “that bourne from which no traveller returns”—the conversation turned upon the wonderful leaps of the Harlequin through clocks, shop-windows, &c.

“It is not half as difficult as you suppose,” said Mackinnon. “I’ll be bound to take the highest leap the very first time I try it.”

We all looked rather incredulous, when the Colonel proceeded,

“If anyone likes to bet me the amount of a dinner at ‘The Piazza Coffee House’ to-morrow, I will accept the wager; and we can come here afterwards to see the new play.”

The bet was made, and a civil note was sent to Mr. Grimaldi, saying that Colonel Mackinnon would like to see him in the green-room at the end of the performance, and to that room we all adjourned. We told “Old Joe” the purport of our visit, and, calling the head-carpenter, he told him to set the clock-scene, and have the “supers” in attendance, with the usual apparatus, to receive the amateur Harle-

quin. Dan Mackinnon (as he was usually called) took off his coat, threw himself into an attitude in front of the stage, turned, took a run, and went through the clock in a manner that surprised all the spectators; for many, including Harlequin, Pantaloons, Columbine, Sprites, Fairies, and Coryphées had assembled to witness the feat. After inviting Grimaldi to our early dinner, and paying our footing, we retired.

The above-mentioned gallant officer, who had served with his regiment during the Peninsular War, and was present at the Battle of Waterloo, was one of the most active men I ever met. When quartered in Spain he was extremely anxious to see the interior of a convent, and, being forbid admittance, managed to get into one of those small turnstiles through which provisions were passed. Doubling himself up, he succeeded in making an entrance, much to the horror of the inmates, more especially the elder ones. A formal complaint was made to the Duke of Wellington, who took no serious notice of it, but treated it

as a frolic, Mackinnon, like all other Guardsmen, being an excellent soldier. The "Iron Duke," however, told his military secretary, Lord Fitzroy Somerset, afterwards Lord Raglan, to tell Mackinnon quietly that such pranks must not be repeated.

The Christmas pantomimes of our day are widely different from what they were in bygone times. The plots of the latter were very simple, there was little or no fun in the opening scene, it was all reserved for the clown, and great was the fun when delineated by that clever actor, Grimaldi. In his days the services of the scene-painter were not nearly as much put into requisition as they now are. The beautiful artistic work known to the present generation as the transformation scene was never heard of. There was a comic opening, generally founded on nursery lore, such as "Mother Goose," "Jack and Jill," "Blue Beard," "Cinderella," "Goody Two-shoes," "Puss in Boots," "Little Red Riding Hood," "Jack and the Bean Stalk," "The Forty Thieves," "Jack the Giant Killer," &c. Occasionally the scene was laid in Fairy

Land ; the opening was generally enlivened by a ballad sung by a gipsy girl, a sailor boy, or a “British tar.” The moment the harlequinade began there was a succession of pantomimic changes of a pointed and humorous character. Among them a cow turned into a pump, suggestive of the *mi-can* plan said to be adopted by dairymen ; a gold-beater’s shop would be changed to a view of the Mint ; a silver race-cup to a padlock and a pair of handcuffs, emblems which in our days would be particularly appropriate as regards the Welchers.

A large wicker basket, with four single Gloucester cheeses for wheels, and children’s black and white wooden horses, would suddenly become a fashionable “drag,” when Grimaldi, equipped in a driving-coat made out of a blanket, large tin plates for buttons, a low-crowned hat improvised out of a pie-dish, a bunch of carrots and greens as a bouquet, a four-horse whip stolen from a carter, would mount the box, looking very much like one of the members of the Four-in-Hand Club. A club widely different from the present coaching,

road, and driving clubs, inasmuch as in those days gentlemen aped the dress and manners of professional coachmen, as was satirically alluded to in the following verse of a popular song:—

“On Epsom Downs
Cries Billy, zounds!
That cannot be Lord Jackey.
Egad, but now I see it is,
I took him for his lackey!”

Then, again, a view of Tilbury Fort would be transformed into a man-of-war, a rustic clod into a smart soldier, the wooden Highlander at a tobacconist’s door into a living, stalwart, kilted corporal of the “Black Watch;” a chair on which the Clown was sitting, a table covered with fruit and wine and cakes; the motley hero and the Pantaloons partaking of these stolen goods, was converted into the stocks and pillory, both the above being encased therein. A venerable watchman, commonly called a “Charley,” asleep in his watch-box, was converted into a decrepid old woman at an apple-stall.

During the evening Grimaldi would introduce

a comic song, which always produced a furore, a compliment due quite as much to his acting as his singing. The above, with graceful dances by the Harlequin and Columbine, the servility of the Pantaloons, and some daring leaps, kept the interest of the young and middle-aged of the audience alive, while the elder were gratified to their hearts' content at witnessing the perfect rapture of the children, who, from the rising of the curtain until its fall, never took their eyes off the stage, bursts of laughter and exclamations of "Oh! oh!" issuing from their lips.

Being upon friendly terms with John Fawcett, so many years stage-manager of Covent Garden Theatre, I attended his leave-taking in the month of May, 1830. The tragedy of "The Gamester" was followed by the play of "Charles II.," in which Mr. Fawcett sustained his original character of Captain Copp. At the conclusion of the tragedy he came forward and delivered the following farewell address:—

"Ladies and gentlemen,—The moment has

arrived when it requires me to have strong nerves not to run into one of two extremes. Should I now affect apathy it would be in bad taste; and did I give way to maudlin sensibility it would be ridiculous. Partial friends have asked me why I quit the stage? Ladies and gentlemen, I have sixty-two reasons, and every one a year long. Were I to say (at my time of life, and with my infirmities) I am sorry to leave this arduous calling I should not speak the truth; but if I were to say I did not feel a pang at parting from you I should tell a lie—‘an odious, damned lie.’ I have held up my hand at the bar of public opinion many a day. My trial has lasted thirty-nine years; this night brings it to a close. Here have been arraigned my judges; here now sit my jury. May I hope for a favourable verdict? Before summing up it is usual to produce witnesses to character. I have a few, and I trust I may have the advantage of their testimony. The parish clerk and sexton of Windsor, one Caleb Quotem, wishes to say a word or two in my behalf; a learned tutor, an LL.D. and an A.S.S.;

Doctor Pangloss, has volunteered his services ; an honest tradesman from Penzance, in Cornwall, Job Thornberry, believes he can induce you to think favourably of me ; a worthy baronet, a great sportsman, though a sad invalid, Sir Mark Chase, would speak ; and, though last, not least, my old friend from Wapping, Captain Copp, presses forward to entreat you to look kindly on me. I have many others, but will not trespass on your patience. And now, ladies and gentlemen, let me drop all assumption of character, and, as myself, as plain John Fawcett, let me (from the bottom of my heart) thank you for all your kindnesses. It has been my ambition, through a long servitude, never, either in my public character as an actor, or in my private character as a man, to do anything which might disgrace my profession. I am now about to leave it, and, if you are of opinion I have succeeded, I ask your kind approbation ; if you have reason to think otherwise I am sure I do not deserve it. I certainly have one great consolation in this trying moment,—a gratification I can more

enjoy because you, my best friends, will partake of it,—it is the unprecedented compliment which has been paid me by my brothers and sisters of my profession. They throng around me to bid me farewell, and to offer me all the assistance in their power. The time of night forbids my availing myself to the extent I could wish of their valuable services, but many of the brightest ornaments of the stage are now waiting to make their bow to you out of regard to an old comrade. Permit me to have the pride of introducing them. Once more I return you my grateful acknowledgments for all your kindness, and then make you my last bow."

CHAPTER XIX.

ACTORS UNFAIRLY CHARGED WITH SHAMMING ILLNESSES—
G. F. COOKE—MRS. BILLINGTON—THE OCCUPANTS OF THE
GALLERY BETTER BEHAVED THAN THEY WEREN'T TO BE.

An accusation in the very nature of the thing, still supposing, and being founded upon some law ; for where there is no law there can be no transgression, and where there can be no transgression there ought to be no accusation.

SOUTH.

PERFORMERS are very often accused, and falsely accused, of shamming illness when unable to attend to their duties, and occasionally the disappointment created by the non-appearance of an actor or actress has led to a serious disturbance. Among others I can quote two memorable instances. On the opening

night of Covent Garden Theatre, on the 14th of September, 1801, Mr. Cooke was announced to appear as the Duke of Glo'ster in “Richard III.” About five o'clock in the afternoon bills were posted about the town, intimating that some accident, as it was apprehended, had prevented the arrival in town of Mr. Cooke. This notification, however, was only known to a part of the audience, and therefore a great clamour arose when an unexpected drama (“Lovers’ Vows”) commenced. Mr. Murray attempted an apology, but in vain, as many persons were extremely violent in expressing their disapprobation. Mr. Lewis also came forward, and endeavoured to calm the tumult. They were desired to declare upon their honour whether Mr. Cooke was in town. The audience were solemnly assured that no delusion was attempted, and that Mr. Cooke had really not arrived.

As strong symptoms of discontent still prevailed, Mr. Lewis again attempted to allay the storm, by informing the audience that any persons who disliked the change in the perform-

ance might receive their money at the door. This offer, which might be expected to give satisfaction, seemed at first to be considered as an indignity; but at length it had its due weight with other considerations. The play of “Lovers’ Vows” was permitted to proceed, and was very well received.

On the 18th the following letters were received by the proprietor of the theatre, thus entirely exonerating Mr. Cooke, who probably suffered from the old adage, “Give a dog a bad name and hang him!”

“ Newcastle, September 15th, 1801.

“SIR,

“From great fatigue and exertion, Mr. Cooke has ruptured a blood-vessel in his chest, which renders it unsafe for him to travel. He is at present under my care, and I hope in a short time to be enabled to permit him to proceed to town. I am, sir,

“Your obedient servant,

“E. KENTISH, M.D.

“Thomas Harris, Esq.”

“ Newcastle, September 15th, 1801.

“ SIR,

“ I trouble you with this at the request of Mr. Cooke, who is at present so much indisposed as to render him incapable of writing to you. He has been very poorly for several days past, but yesterday evening was attacked with such excruciating pains in the breast that the doctor took a large quantity of blood from him, and he hopes in a few days he may be able to travel, if he has no relapse. He received a letter from Mr. Lewis, dated 5th instant, but it, being directed to Manchester, did not reach him until too late. The distress of his mind on *your account* is beyond anything I can say. The faculty, as well as his friends, will do everything in their power for his speedy recovery, in order that he may soon be with you. I am, sir,

“ Yours most obediently,

“ GEORGE DUNN.

“ Thomas Harris, Esq.”

The above letters, although made known to

a considerable portion of the public, did not produce the desired effect, for on the 19th of October a numerous audience was collected to witness Cooke in “Richard III.,” when a general impatience and anxiety seemed to prevail. Before the tragedy began, Mr. Cooke came forward with a countenance strongly significant of alarm and solicitude. In a moment the generosity of the English character burst forth, and he was received with shouts of applause. At length a deep silence prevailed, and he addressed the audience to the following effect:—

“Ladies and gentlemen,—With the most painful concern, I feel myself under the necessity of apologizing here for the first time since I had the honour of appearing before you.”

Here Mr. Cooke was interrupted with a loud cry of “Off! off!” from the galleries, mixed with plaudits from the boxes. Every part of the house seemed to take an interest in the business; all was tumult and confusion. Silence being restored, Mr. Cooke proceeded:—

“When I left London I had no permission to be absent on the opening of the theatre, but I had

many reasons to think I should not be immediately wanted. The letter which Mr. Harris sent to me did not reach Manchester until after I had left it, and when I did receive it, with no possible exertion could I have been here in time."

Here another interruption took place, but not so great as the former. Mr. Cooke continued :—

"The events since you well know. I can only say that I am sincerely sorry for what has happened, and, though I may fail of success, it shall be my most earnest endeavour to deserve it."

The address was followed by shouts of "Bravo! bravo!" and Mr. Cooke retired amid loud and almost unqualified applause. Nothing could exceed the beauties with which Mr. Cooke embellished this arduous character, and on the above evening he gave to the costume of the part a new and appropriate effect, by wearing armour in the fight of Bosworth Field.

The other memorable instance occurred at Drury Lane, in which the celebrated singer, Mrs. Billington, was the heroine. A crowded house was attracted to hear this lady in her

favourite character of Madame in Dr. Arne's opera of "Artaxerxes." She went through the first and second acts with spirit, though some imagined they could discern marks of indisposition. In the last song of the second act, Mrs. Billington was taken ill, but she concluded it, and retired. Mr. Dignum and Mr. Kelly successively came forward, and, stating the circumstance, craved the indulgence of the audience for a short time. At length Mr. Kemble appeared, and informed them that Mrs. Billington had been taken so ill while singing her last song that she had fainted before she had reached her dressing-room, and continued to be attacked with violent fits. He stated that she was attended by two gentlemen of the faculty, who had pronounced that her life would be endangered if she attempted to go on with the remaining part of the performance that night. Under these circumstances, he trusted that the generosity of the audience would dispense with Mrs. Billington's appearance, and that they would permit the after-piece to begin.

The greater part of the audience acquiesced;

it was, however, some considerable time before the galleries were so quiet as to permit the farce of “Who’s the Duke?” to be heard, and during the uproar groans, hisses, and shouting deafened completely the applause of the well-thinking part of the spectators. After a time, all expressions of discontent ceased, and the piece went off with great *éclat*.

It appeared from a testimonial afterwards published by Mr. Heavyside, the surgeon, that Mrs. Billington underwent an operation the following day, and had a needle extracted from the flesh of her right arm just below the shoulder. Her arm, it seems, had, a day or two before, assumed a black appearance, which alarmed her and her friends with apprehensions of a mortification; and it seemed very likely that a motion of her arm in the performance might throw the needle into a position to give her acute pain, which, aggravated by the before-mentioned apprehensions of danger, would throw her into the fits which followed. It was not until the expiration of a fortnight that this lady was able to resume her professional duties.

The occupants of the gallery are very much better behaved than they were in what is termed the palmy days of the drama, for I find that, during the performance of Dr. Young's tragedy of "The Revenge," a disturbance took place for no earthly reason. In this drama, the part of Zanga was peculiarly suited to the talents of John Kemble; indeed he hardly appeared to have studied any character with more accuracy, or to have exerted himself anywhere with more persevering success. In the last scene particularly he displayed a spirit and characteristic energy worthy the best days of the stage. The dreadful animosity and determined rage for vengeance were throughout mingled with a subtle humility and dissembled affection towards Alonzo that showed the skill of a master in the art.

On the occasion I refer to, during the fourth act, so much turbulence prevailed in the gallery that the performance was wholly interrupted; when Mr. Kemble came forward, and addressed the audience in the following words:—

"Ladies and gentlemen,—It is impossible to

express the pleasure which we feel in seeing you here ; but the end of your visit will be defeated, unless you condescend to honour us with some attention.”

This address was so manifestly provoked by unruly violence, and was delivered in such a modest spirit, that the audience, far from considering it an unbecoming freedom, loudly applauded it as the involuntary impulse of insulted genius, and the rude disturbers of the performance sank abashed into silence.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

84. 215

fa 10

